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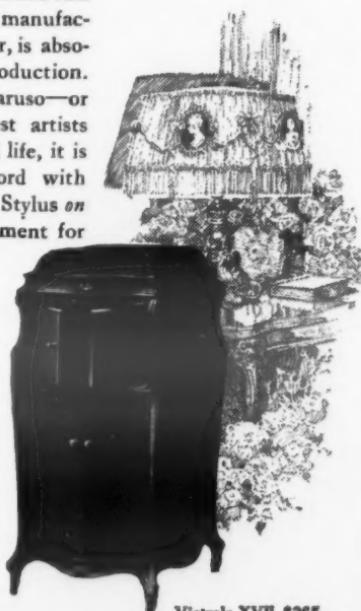
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AINSLEE'S

The Magazine That Entertains

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, \$2.00

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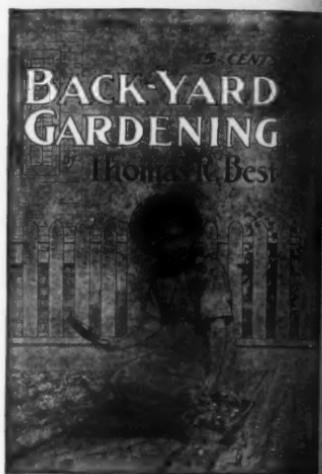
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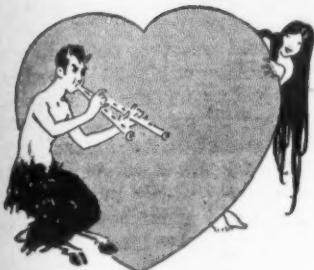
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The Mancac

By Charles Saxby

Author of "The Temple Girl,"
"Her Ladyship's Second Youth," etc.

CHAPTER I.

FOR two days the steamer droned south and east from New York, constantly the fixed center of an unchanging circle of gray sky and sea—a tumbled sky, an even more tumbled sea; and for two days Dominick Tempest lay in his berth, as motionless as he could contrive.

Not that he was seasick; no one ever is, not even on a first voyage. He was merely resting, he told himself and the steward, who proffered undesired food. The second evening, he wavered up on deck and hung to a rail, wishing that the West Indies weren't so beastly far off. There was a misty moon peering from a wrack of clouds, but its stability mocked him, and he went below, tumbled into his berth again, slept fourteen hours, and awoke a new being.

It was evidently late in the morning, and though his cabin port was open, the bedclothes oppressed him with a sense of heat. He flung them off and lay cooling in his tumbled pajamas, trying to remember of what it was that this sudden warmth reminded him. Overnight, the February chill had given place to May; there were gentle slapping noises all along the hull of the steamer, and the sense of some tremendous dif-

ference stealing in through the open port.

A bath completed the cure, leaving him enormously refreshed, seemingly hollow to the tips of his toes. As he shaved, he found himself humming an air. What it was, or where he had heard it, he could not have said, but then he hardly tried to; a first shave on board ship leaves but little leisure for intellectual activities. The thing came of itself, seemingly just a part of the general strangeness he felt seeping in through the enveloping fabric of the vessel; a queer little tune, full of sudden minors set to a rhythmically broken beat. As he dived into his steamer trunk for a spring suit, he found himself improvising words to fit it:

"Red flower of the dawn—red flow'r of da-awn—"

It needed a drumbeat, and his fingers half consciously tapped in time.

He sought the companionway, taking it two steps at a time with the assured lightness of his new-found sea legs. At the top there was no hesitation as to which way he should go. To his own impetus was added a long, persuasive roll of the vessel, and he shot out through a door and brought up against an awning stanchion.

"You should be careful how you bolt out on deck on the down swing," drawled a voice close by. "A chap got chucked overboard that way one voyage. This old tub is the worst roller on the line."

"All right. I'll be good," gasped Dominick. "Just let me get my wind."

But it was not so much the impact of the post that had taken his breath as it was the shock of the light. He had really slept himself into another world, a great crystal of vivid blue, stirred by a salty wind like the caress of warm fingers.

And still it was not so much the outward sight as that inward shock, as of some long gone thing that could not be quite remembered. But, after all, he was entitled to some such half memory. For all his twenty-two years in the United States, he was West Indian born.

"Thanks for the tip," he laughed, turning to the man who had spoken, a long, slim individual, stretched out in a deck chair. Then he finished with a burst of irrepressible enthusiasm: "Say—isn't this stunning?"

The other man glanced about him with a look of mild inquiry.

"This? Oh—I see. It's just beginning to commence to be. We're about abreast of the Bahamas now. Wait until we get down to where the real thing begins."

"What?" asked Dominick incredulously. "Is it better than this?"

"You've never been to the islands yet; that's evident."

"Not for over twenty years, so I hardly remember much of it," Dominick returned. "But I happened to be born there."

"Born there?"

The man looked up with a sharp gleam of interest; then, after a frank survey of the other's person, he added:

"But surely you are an American."

"By training and adoption, and quite unhyphenated, too. I was sent to the

States when I was about four years old. But it all came back to me the moment I stepped on deck."

Dominick swung himself on the rail, hooking his feet about the awning post, comfortably disposed for a chat.

It had never occurred to him yet that any one could seriously object to his society. Looking at him as he perched there, outlined against the brilliant sky, there seemed no reason why any one should—a head of dark red hair; a face and throat of a certain sweeping modeling, the eyes set widely beneath black brows that lifted at the outer corners; a lithe body trained to leanness without angularity. With a little more flesh, he might have been more regularly good looking; as he was, he conveyed, when stripped, something of the white austerity of a classic statue. He looked something like a young Mercury, in severe training, but his glance was intensely modern, the quick, appraising glance of a young man who has moved much among his own kind. His suit was gray, his tie severe, his shirt a triumph; the whole effect that of the good nature of an untroubled mind and body.

As to the man in the deck chair, Dominick was a little at a loss. Most of him seemed steamer rug and the rest carelessness. But then he was obviously English, and the more these English were in themselves, the less they seemed to care about appearances. That he was about thirty, long and thin, dark in the purely northern type of pale skin and gray eyes, did not help much in classifying him. There was an impression of contradictions about him—sensitivity in the mouth, humor in the eyes, both controlled by a stamp of unmistakable authority.

Waiting for the other to go on, Dominick half consciously began humming that little air again, and there came other words to fit it:

"Quiet on the air the dawn chill's falling—"

Where the dickens was it he had heard the thing? The man in the chair looked up in surprise.

"Where did you get that?" he asked; then, with a quick survey of Dominick's general effect of well-tailored youth: "Surely they're not singing that in the vaudeville theaters?"

"Thanks," said Dominick, flashing him a grin. "No, it's not 'Cyclonic Eva's' latest. I don't know where I heard it; it just came to me. Do you know it?"

"It's the old 'Dawn Song' of the Caribs."

"Is that so?" said Dominick indifferently. "It'd make a splendid tango, quickened up a bit. Let me see," he went on. "The Caribs—they're the real, old, original, aboriginal, my-God-we-are-discovered, Columbus-found natives of the West Indies, aren't they?"

"Exactly. First cousins of the Incas, connected by marriage with the Aztecs, poor relations of El Dorado, and supposed to be the remnants of the fabled Atlanteans."

"Heavens! Fancy having to live up to all that!" Dominick laughed. "Are there any left now?"

"Just a few, a very few indeed, a strange little remnant up there on Morne Garou and the peak of the Soufrière, still living their old life. Pappa Oppellou still lights the mancac's fire. I've seen it on clear night from Destries. A queer survival—that irreconcilable old barbarian kindling the flames of invocation for the return of his lord!"

"Where is all this?" asked Dominick, stirred by the picture painted by the man's words.

"In Tabuga."

"Tabuga—that accounts for it!" Dominick exclaimed. "I probably heard the song as a kid, and now it's sweating out on me. Readjustive cerebration—hereditary geographical complex—fluence of environment on subconscious brain centers—et cetera and so forth.

That's all I can remember of my psychology course. It all went kiting when I took up engineering."

"You come from Tabuga, then?" asked the other, as if that were the only part he had heard.

"Since twenty-two years have elapsed between acts, it would probably be more correct to say that I'm going there."

"So am I—or, rather, going back there."

The man loosened a layer of plaid rug and extracted a cardcase.

"Mr. Herbert C. Caine-Hammond," read Dominick. He searched his own pockets, bringing to light an odd glove, some bills, a dried rose—which he looked at in complete perplexity, then threw overboard—a pipe, and a gunmetal cigar lighter.

"I'll have to give it up," he said at last. "You must take my word, unsupported by documentary evidence. My name is Tempest."

"Tempest?" Caine-Hammond sat up in quick interest. "And you come from Tabuga?"

"I'm going there," Dominick repeated, but the other brushed it aside.

"Are you any relation to Arthur Tempest?"

"I really can't say," said Dominick carelessly. "As far as I know, I have no relatives living."

"You can't be a nephew, for Arthur Tempest had no brothers. You say you left the island twenty-two years ago?"

"Exactly," replied Dominick coolly. "Any more information with which I can supply you?"

Caine-Hammond relapsed, with a laugh at his own persistence.

"You can't snub a West Indian when he's on the trail of family affairs. There's no place in the world where just who you are looms so large. Each island is divided socially between three or four white families, little social oligarchies with all the insane pride of big toads in little puddles."

"But there must be people who see the foolishness of all that."

"There are. Myself, for instance. But one can't quite escape it. It's in the very air down there. Besides—there are reasons back of it. When any one comes to Tabuga with a name so well known as yours, we naturally wonder who he can be. The Tempests have loomed large in the island for two hundred years, beginning with a Sir John Tempest who was deported from South Carolina after 1776 as a rabid Tory. And rabid Tories the men of the family have remained ever since."

"And also the women?" queried Dominick.

"One hardly discusses the ladies of a family, does one?"

"You practically did so by implying a difference," Dominick objected.

"Well—since the difference was implied, we'll let it stand," said Caine-Hammond lightly.

Dominick nodded, hardly hearing. He was busy with something else, another half recollection that came to his lips in a series of groping whistles. Then it swelled to a birdlike twittering—four long notes, widely spaced, followed by a laughing run down the scale. He repeated it, wondering how it came to be rambling loose in his head at just that moment.

"Since you know so much, perhaps you can tell me what that is?" he asked. "It isn't quite right, though. Wait—I've got it!"

He repeated it, with a slight change that made all the difference—a lowering of the first notes, drawing them out with an insistence that accentuated the lilting scale that followed.

"It seems familiar. Do it again." Caine-Hammond listened intently. "Why—it's the song of the crater bird!"

"The what?"

"The zombi bird, the niggers call it—a sort of linnet that's found only round the Crater Lake in Tabuga, and

rarely even there. The niggers believe that whoever hears it will inevitably return to the island."

"It seems to be working in my case," Dominick laughed. "I wonder how I heard it."

"Possibly you were taken up to the crater as a child—" Caine-Hammond began. Then he broke off suddenly, his eyes sweeping Dominick's figure with astonished enlightenment. "Tempest! Oh—by Jove!" he muttered under his breath.

He rose, gathering up his rug and books in a cool preparation for departure, nodding to Dominick with a conclusive courtesy.

"I'm delighted to have met you, Mr. Tempest. Probably we shall meet again before landing."

He went, leaving Dominick to the astonished realization of a snub. That cut deeply, for it was almost the first time such a thing had come his way. Probably meet again before landing—when they were cooped, for five days more, on the same steamer! What the devil did the fellow mean by it? Dominick thought of the friends he had left in New York, of the frat pin in his coat, of the houses at which he was welcome. But somehow none of that seemed to count just then. It dawned upon him that, in setting foot on this steamer, he had taken the first step toward another world, with prejudices and standards of its own, in which he would have to "make good" all over again.

It had never occurred to him to wonder who he was. His twenty-two years in the States had been spent partly in the home of a guardian, mostly at school, college, and lastly at the Boston Tech. There had been ample money for his education and to give him a good start—his mother's fortune, he had been told; a mother of whom he had no record except a tiny prayer book, inscribed, in a dashing, irregular hand: "Josephine Tempest. Tempest Vale,

Tabuga." He had never asked questions, accepting himself with the unthinkingness of youth. Those twenty-two years had been years of normal, healthy growth from a child of about four to young manhood, shot through at times with a tormenting little homesickness for something warm, brilliant, instinct with tremendous vitality.

So strong had that ache become of late that he had determined on this trip before settling down to work. He would "get it out of his system," as he had laughingly expressed it. But in the chill of the Englishman's leave-taking, it struck him that, in thus going back, he might discover things too deeply rooted in himself for any getting out. There must have been some sort of a family once, and, after all, what did he know about them?

Under the call of the sun, the decks were becoming populous—winter tourists, preening themselves like gay-plumed birds of passage, in clothes three months ahead of the New York calendar; returning West Indians, marked by careless dress and an air of official austerity. Insulated by their different ideas, the two classes kept apart; it was only in himself, Dominick thought, that the different, invisible currents had met and momentarily clashed.

Near him was a girl who puzzled him, since she seemed not definitely of either class, combining the dash and style of the one with the quiet authority of the other. His first impression was one of color—a complexion of brilliant fairness, a mass of hair like burnished copper spun to incredible fineness. Like most men, he glanced first at her ankles. More than satisfied on that point, he sought her face, relieved to find it not of the magazine-cover prettiness he had feared—a mouth too wide, a chin too determined, a nose too short for regular beauty, but all fused to a charming whole by the dancing, challenging sparks of her eyes, luminously brown,

beautifully set. She sat there with a pile of books and magazines, neither seeking male companionship, like the tourist maidens, nor sheltering under the wing of a chaperon, like the English girls.

Even as he looked, came the notes of a bugle, announcing lunch, and the girl gathered her belongings and left. As Dominick, a little later, hesitated at the entrance of the dining saloon, the head steward stepped up to him, professionally urbane.

"Yes, sir—Mr. Tempest," he said, as Dominick gave his name. "This way. I have placed you here, sir—and the lady next you."

"The lady?" queried Dominick.

"Yes, sir. Your sister, I presumed."

Dominick started as he saw a mass of red-gold hair. The seat next him was occupied by the girl who had so interested him. Her face was averted, her glance concentrated on the menu while he settled himself. Then she laid it down, turning to him with a fine frankness that disdained to conceal its interest.

"I'm so curious," she said. "I saw your name on the card, there, and looked your destination up in the passenger list. I'm wondering if we are related."

"Related?" wondered Dominick.

"Yes, since you also are going to Tabuga. I am Miss Tempest—Josephine Tempest, of Tempest Vale."

CHAPTER II.

How he got through that lunch Dominick never knew. He could only hope that habit was carrying him along the current of polite behavior above his flame of impatience and curiosity.

As they came on deck again, Josephine Tempest turned to him.

"You say you actually don't know who you are?"

"I've always understood that my

name was Tempest and that I was born in the West Indies."

"But have you no proof of any kind?"

"Only a—a little book that belonged to my mother. It has her signature in it: Josephine Tempest, Tempest Vale. That was why I was so bowled over at your name."

She nodded in grave understanding.

"There was another Josephine Tempest—my aunt. She died when I was about a year old. There was some trouble, I believe, though I never knew what it was. You see, I've been away so much; at first in school in England and France and lastly these three years at Wellesley. Have you the book with you?" she finished.

"Yes. I always keep it, because it's—well—the only thing I have."

"It happens that I also have something that belonged to my aunt. I will get it, and you shall show me the book."

In a few moments, they were back again, seeking a more retired part of the deck. Closely she examined the prayer book, comparing the signature with that on a small frame she held in her hand. Laying it on the book's cover, she held them both out to him, and he saw that the writing was identical, its dashing impulse still preserved by the faded ink.

"Have you any portrait of your mother?" she asked.

"No. I've really thought but little about her, but now I begin to realize how much I've always wanted to know."

"Then turn that frame over," she said.

It was a miniature, set in a rim of old-fashioned silver—just a little square of ivory, a smear of paint, but it had outlasted the beautiful, mutinous face that it pictured, the bronze-red hair, the eyes cloudy with longing; a face that, the instant one saw it, one knew was destined for a story. Dominick's eyes

became misty as he looked, and he heard himself saying, in a rush of conviction:

"Yes, that is she. I seem to remember—"

He stopped in surprise as there came to his lips, from somewhere beyond the confines of his memory, a childish word—"Maman." There was an instant of pain, as if the back of his brain were being stretched apart, and through the crack came another word, like the echo of a different voice speaking, in a deeper note, to that face in the hollow of his hand:

"Zo-zé-phiné."

Then he looked up in a puzzled question.

"But if her name was Tempest, how is it that mine is Tempest, too?"

In spite of herself, Josephine's glance went to his finger nails—that instinctive glance of the born West Indian. With a chill had come the thought that perhaps the prayer book had been merely stolen long ago, and that Dominick, unknown to himself, might be but the scion of one of those illegal unions of white father and black mother that so embitter the family life of the islands. It was with relief that she noted the pink transparency of his finger tips, free from any damning stain of purple.

"She may have married a cousin," she suggested. "We have some in the other islands."

She glanced down the deck, and her vivid interest cooled.

"Here comes Mr. Caine-Hammond," she said. "He's a great friend of my father's. Have you met him?"

"I have," replied Dominick flatly.

"He's the attorney general of Tabuga—quite a high-and-mighty personage down there." She turned as the other came up. "Mr. Caine-Hammond, I'm discovering an unknown relative."

"Yes, Mr. Tempest and I have already met," Caine-Hammond replied, nodding easily to Dominick. "Here is

the book I was speaking of this morning, Miss Tempest."

They accepted the cue, dropping their intimacies for the abstractions of literature. Josephine soon left them, and the two men faced each other in a certain challenge.

"You didn't tell me this morning that another Tempest was on board," said Dominick.

"No, I did not."

Caine-Hammond looked at the other, and there was almost a hint of compassion in his glance as he went on:

"I have, of course, no right to advise you, Mr. Tempest, but I will say this: If you must see the West Indies, then go on to Trinidad or Grenada—anywhere but Tabuga. Or, better still, remain on board this steamer and go right back to New York."

Dominick stirred uneasily. He hated mysteries, especially about himself.

"What reason do you give for this advice?" he asked.

"I'm not explaining myself, Mr. Tempest, but my warning is friendly."

Dominick's eyes grew stormy and his back was taut as he turned it on the other.

"Then I thank you for that. As to the rest, I prefer my own judgment."

"The trouble is that you have no evidence on which to base it," the Englishman retorted.

Rebuffed by Dominick, Caine-Hammond sought Josephine.

"But I don't understand," she said, as he finished speaking. "Is not this Mr. Tempest my cousin? And yet you say that my father would object to my knowing his own sister's son!"

"All I say is that, considering the relationship, you had perhaps better wait for your father's approval."

"Is it something personal to Mr. Tempest? Some reason why women should not become friends with him?"

"From our very short acquaintance,

I should be inclined to say that he is all right—as men go."

"You're fair, at least," she answered, and he gave a twisted smile.

"Oh—fair! But, seriously, family authority is pretty rigid still down in the islands, and especially as regards the women."

"Especially as regards the women," she repeated, her tone half grave, wholly mocking. "Do you know, that phrase is singularly illuminating? I know of no other that could have expressed so much in so few words. But I'm afraid that I am no longer a West Indian. I've been too long away."

Even as Dominick had done, she left him, swaying lightly along the deck, the wind blowing coppery wisps about her cheeks. For the moment Caine-Hammond saw her, in her lithe aliveness of a keen mind in a poised body, as the very symbol of the modern feminine surge, the iron girdles of custom lying broken at her feet. She had evidently forgotten the life to which she was returning and the narrowness of its prejudices, but as he gazed, he almost felt that perhaps she would be able to walk her own high path.

Of one thing he was certain—his well-meant attempt at interference had only fanned the flame of her interest in this new-found cousin of hers.

On board of every steamer there is always at least one couple whom the other passengers, by common consent, leave alone; two people to whom eyes turn with an involuntary softening, a regard of which the two themselves are usually unaware.

So it was with Josephine and Dominick even while they, to themselves, were merely on terms of pleasant friendship, never noting how much of their time, when apart, was filled with thoughts of the other. It might have been the sense of mystery that enveloped Dominick, or it might have been the increasing atmosphere of those

islands daily drawing nearer, spots of wondrous beauty, swimming in a sensuous sort of ache that nothing seemed ever to appease.

Day by day the crystal of sky and sea grew more brilliant. Queer things began to appear—a flock of ungainly pelicans overhead; a solitary turtle basking on the waves, serenely at home; silver showers of flying fish; the green fire of the phosphorus at night. Then gracious land shapes loomed high amid the blue haze, taking form, color, solidity, like some magic trick of materialization, then fading again in mystic remoteness.

It was the sixth evening, and they were running past one of these, close enough to catch the land breeze with its hints of exotic perfume. Standing by the rail in a solitary portion of the deck, Josephine looked up at it, stretching out her arms in involuntary welcome.

"Oh—the dear islands! I love them so!"

"Which one is it?" asked Dominick. "That must be Guadeloupe."

"Guadeloupe." He repeated the name, rolling its softened syllables. "Waw-de-loupe. It satisfies one, somehow. What does it mean?"

"The double one." It's really two islands, you see."

"But what language is it? It sounds Spanish, but it isn't."

"It's the old Carib name."

"The Caribs!" He lifted his eyes to the silhouette high against the stars. "What a strange life!"

He shivered as he seemed to catch a fleeting impression of some different life among those peaks, halfway betwixt sea and sky—a passing flash of green gloom and tumbling water, of gold-brown bodies slipping amid a tangle of broad leaves.

"It fascinates me, somehow—the sheer health of it."

"The Caribs? Why, they're nothing but brown people," she returned, a

touch of arrogance in her tones. Then she laughed at herself. "You see, I'm a West Indian, after all. It's in my blood."

"I think it must be in mine, too," he murmured, looking at her.

The steamer trailed a wake of green fire, and the pale glow of it beat up on her face, her throat, on the arms gleaming through thin chiffon. For the moment she looked some elfin creature, beyond the bounds of human laws. Then she turned back to the deck lights, a living, breathing woman, daintily costly.

"What is it that is in your blood?" she asked lightly.

"I don't know," he answered, half choked by a sudden rush of unexpected emotion. "Unless it is in my blood just to—love you."

It must be that all humanity aches to hear those words, whispered in just such a way, the effect of them is so wondrous.

"Josephine—Josephine—Josephine!"

The strange magic that lurks in a name had him in its thrall, and he muttered it over and over again, to her hair, to her eyes, to her lips. Then, without his own volition, came another name, a deeper tone in his throat:

"Zo-zé-phine!"

She leaned back, her hands pushing from his chest against the strength of his arms.

"No—no! Please send him away!" she cried, closing her eyes.

"Send whom away?" he asked, puzzled.

"That other man! He makes me afraid!"

"What? Afraid of *me*?"

"No, not of you—of *him*! It was as if some one else looked from your eyes and spoke from your mouth—some one dark and fierce and—oh—savage!"

Dominick laughed, catching her to him again.

"That was my love for you that you

saw. It almost frightens me, too, it's so strong."

"And to-morrow we land," she said, a little later.

"To-morrow! Oh, why is there a to-morrow?" cried Dominick, torn by a pang of ecstasy. "I wish there were only to-night, and that we could go on forever, like Paolo and Francesca—wandering in each other's arms! I'm afraid of to-morrow, with its other lands and other people; afraid of what it may do to us."

"Do you doubt me?" she asked.

"Doubt *you*? Never! It's simply that—suppose something came between us?"

"Then I shall chain you to me," she said, drawing from her neck the only jewel she wore, an amethyst pendant in a green-gold setting. "There!" She slipped it over his head, drawing it about his throat, tightening the slender chain. "You're mine now. My shackles are upon you. See that you never, never lose it!"

"Lose it!"

Dominick thrust the pendant out of sight under his collar, quivering, as, still warm from the place where it had rested, it slid down onto his breast.

"If ever I lose it, may—"

"Hush!" she said, stopping his lips with her fingers. "Don't say too much!"

"What else is there to say—what worth saying? Except that I love you!"

CHAPTER III.

It was his first evening in Tabuga, and Dominick stood on the ramparts of the old fort at Destries, besieged by a rush of emotions—anger, pain, longing, bewilderment—yet half soothed by the drug of the elemental beauty all about him: a wide vista of sea, indigo and silver under the moon; a land-locked cup of a bay about which the white houses of the town climbed the hills; back of it all, the great bulk of a moun-

tain, its crest hidden by a collar of clouds; the dismantled fort on which he stood, a star-shaped wedge of masonry from whose cracks sprang parasitic wild figs, green and purple in the moonlight on their writhing stems; no taint of smoke, no sound of traffic, only, from the streets below, the voices of negroes, liltingly soft, with bursts of meaningless laughter; an enveloping steady heat; a drenching fragrance from millions of unseen blooms of the night.

Dominick soaked his nerves in it, as in a cup of darkly luminous perfume, easing the sting of those last moments on board the steamer, when Josephine had presented him to her father—that Arthur Tempest who, if the evidences of prayer book and miniature were to be believed, must be his uncle; a man of about fifty, plumply dark, dressed as for a Fifth Avenue club on a summer day, moving with that air of conscious dominance which seemed to stamp all the white people of these islands.

Only for an instant had his courteous shell been broken as he had heard Dominick's name. What was it that had most plainly looked from his eyes in that moment? Fear, dislike, or sheer contempt? Josephine's laughing hint of a possible relationship had been ignored, and all that Dominick had to comfort him were her whispered words at parting:

"Just a few days—then come to me at Tempest Vale. I shall ache for you. But these first days belong to my father."

Josephine! At the murmur of her name, he seemed to see her again, hovering in the spaces, an upspringing flame of humanity with the purple gleam of amethyst at her throat. From his own, he drew out the pendant, thrilling at the warmth that had never cooled in its swift passing from flesh to flesh.

Josephine! It was strange that the two women who had meant and were to mean most in all his life should bear

the same name. His wife—his mother! He wondered at the half-tragic beauty of that miniature. Looking around on this island which had been her home, he really thought of her for the first time in his life, tried to picture her standing, perhaps, on that very spot, or walking on one of those streets between the white walls topped by nodding palms, their fronds alive with the jeweled flash of humming birds.

"My mother!" Half consciously he spoke it aloud, his lips stiff about the unaccustomed word.

Then he flushed angrily, as men will when caught in a moment of emotional betrayal, for he saw that he was not alone. Coming down the broken steps, wraithlike against the moon-yellowed walls, was a woman's figure, a white woman, but different from any that he had yet seen in Destries. Tall, gray-haired, her face just a glimmer of white against the black of her gown, lit by eyes startlingly large in their shadowed sockets, she moved, to the shrill sound of their trilling, amid a little cloud of canaries that perched on her hands and shoulders, darting off, returning again, wheeling like a flock of tiny golden doves about a ruined tower.

To his surprise, she came straight toward him, her lips set in a smile, her eyes full on his in an awed delight. Then she spoke, or, rather, whispered:

"David—it is you! They are allowing me to see you!"

For a moment, in the strangeness of the place, Dominick felt a touch of unease. Then, glancing at the woman, he thought he understood.

"I'm afraid you're making a mistake," he said quietly.

He almost wished he had not spoken as he saw the effect of his words. There was horror in her eyes; her hands moved to her bosom in a tremor that set the canaries to fluttering in shrill protest. As if still unconvinced, she advanced, staring incredulously.

"You are real?" she breathed. "You are alive?"

"I believe so," Dominick answered.

"You must excuse me," the woman said, drawing back in a recovered dignity. "But so few people come to this place—so few that are alive, at least. At first I thought that you were—were the one of all I most desire, but am never permitted to see. But I must wait—just a little longer. You know who I am?"

"I only arrived in Tabuga to-day," replied Dominick, his voice gentle with the suspicion that was upon him.

"I thought everybody knew me—but then things are so strange. I am Ma-an Margaret, or so the negroes call me, and of course I must be if they say so, mustn't I? But then they say also that I am mad. Do you think so?"

"I would hardly say that of any one."

She seemed to forget him, crooning to her canaries. He wished she would go on and leave him alone. With all the vigor of his untouched youth, he shrank from things warped, and, as the woman hovered blackly amid her birds, she was like a shadow across this, his first path on the island.

"I'm not mad," she said suddenly. "It's simply that I see more clearly. How can they not see, on such nights as this, when the moon rides high and the caves of the sea are astir? I walk here with those who are gone—with all but the one I most long to see."

Then came a quick question:

"Who are you?"

"Just a visitor."

"A-h!" It breathed out in a moan of disappointment. "I hoped so that you might be the one for whom I wait!"

"But I am alive," Dominick reminded her, angry at himself for shivering at her eerie imaginings.

Looking more closely, he saw that she had probably been handsome in her youth, but it was as if a sponge, soaked in some mental Lethe, had been swept

across her, wiping from her all realities, leaving her as nearly disembodied as those whom she claimed as her unseen companions.

"Alive—yes." She nodded somberly. "So is he. He must be, the one for whom I wait, or how shall he come to set me free?"

"Perhaps you are free now," said Dominick, with a vague idea of soothing.

"Free? How can I be when I sinned? Only my birds are free. They go and come and bring me messages from him. See?"

With a motion of her hands, Ma-am Margaret sent the birds into the air, circling in twittering alarm about her head. In a moment they were back again, nestling about her, their throats swelling with song.

"You hear them?" she murmured, laying lips to their tiny heads. "They're telling me that it will be all right. That's what they always say—that is what I live on." She looked at Dominick in another abrupt transition. "You stay long here?"

"I don't know."

"Then go—go at once!" she cried vehemently. "There are things here—so strong—they chain you! Beautiful things—that is why they are dangerous. Do you know what I did?"

"I doubt if you did anything wrong," returned Dominick.

"No, it was not wrong, for I did it for love—of him. Tell me"—she caught at Dominick's arm in entreaty—"can anything one does for love be wrong?"

"I hardly think so."

Quieted by his tone, she released her hold.

"I wanted him so with me, just a little longer, just until we could go together. But then—to keep him—there were so many things necessary—things that I couldn't give him. And so I took the flesh of his flesh and the blood of

his blood and—sold them—that I might keep him with me."

"Is that so?" murmured Dominick, wishing only that she would go and take her weird imaginings with her.

"Yes, but it was no use. Sin is never any use. I've learned that. He went, and now—they—stand between and keep me from passing to him. I must wait—wait—until that flesh and blood comes back to me and speaks the word that sets me free. I must wait—just a little—little longer."

To his relief, she passed on, seeming to forget him, trailing across the rampart to the shrilling of her birds, down the steps between the writhing roots of the wild figs.

He was glad that she was gone, moving away as in a cage of her own fantasies. He was alone again to think of Josephine; but it was hardly thinking, rather just feeling, as if the breeze of the night, which must have passed across her face, brought hints of her actual presence.

So he stood until another step aroused him with the ring of spurs. Turning, he saw to his surprise that it was Caine-Hammond, and his surprise deepened as the other spoke:

"Mr. Tempest, they told me at the hotel that you had inquired the way up here."

"You were looking for me?" exclaimed Dominick, with lifting eyebrows. "Why?"

The memory of Caine-Hammond's board-ship manner still stung him, but that manner seemed to have changed. After the strange Ma-am Margaret's ghostly imaginations, he at least brought a sense of warm aliveness. Lean and straight in his riding dress, he had an air of being completely at home, laughing easily at Dominick's coolness.

"Why do we do anything?" he parried. "We think we know—and then we find we have really been doing something entirely different. Just at present,

I think I came to advise you again to take to-morrow's steamer for New York."

"That is impossible," said Dominick shortly.

"You're determined to stay, then?"

"It is no longer a matter of my own volition."

Caine-Hammond's eyes narrowed as the other's answer confirmed his suspicions as to Dominick's reasons for remaining. He spoke, more lightly:

"Of course you know best. But I must warn you—there are strange things in Tabuga."

"I've just encountered one of them," laughed Dominick. "Who on earth is Ma-am Margaret?"

"You have seen her? But then you would. Strangers somehow always encounter the strange things first. She's mad, of course, but harmless. Look here!" Caine-Hammond's tone took on an added briskness. "I'm riding half across the island to-night. How would you like to get a horse and come part way with me?"

"I thought you had decided not to have anything to do with me," returned Dominick bluntly.

"The most precious privilege of man is to change his mind. Also, it's just possible that I may have discovered that I was mistaken. I'm going out to Tempest Vale," Caine-Hammond added casually. "If you care to ride halfway with me—"

Tempest Vale! The words burned into Dominick's mind, effacing everything else. To go even halfway there was more than he had hoped for so soon, bringing a rush of warmth for the man who made it possible.

In half an hour they were off, cantering out on the coast road, through miles of whispering sugar cane rolling over the land, the play of the fireflies among the leaves like the glitter of the moon on a green sea.

Caine-Hammond was silent, leaving

Dominick to the witchery of the night and place. A trained administrator, he had learned to leave situations alone until that which was in them came out. Except to follow, Dominick was hardly aware of him, lost in the sense of an alchemy of the dark that stole into him, calling on things in him whose existence he had as yet never suspected.

He seemed to remember it all so well, and yet there was a feeling of lack, as if those childish years before he had been sent away had contained something more than this, strangely enchanting though it was. The road climbed steadily upward, with an ever-increasing wildness beyond its rigid curves as the mountain swung back, revealing unexpected spaces. Save for a few parties of negroes, padding silently to town, the road was deserted; but as they topped a ridge, a man stepped from a mass of bamboo, stopping them with a quick:

"Miché Hammon—that be you?"

"Oh—hello, Gabou!"

Caine-Hammond drew rein as the man approached—a young fellow of about Dominick's own age, clad solely in cotton trousers of faded blue, girt by a broad belt in which was stuck a hunting knife; for the rest, a body of golden bronze, a shock of straight black hair, a broad face, triangular as a cat's, with thin nostrils and lips and eyes of a smoldering black.

"Yes, me Gabou. I been get you word, *miché*. Them nigger, he tell me you say for me meet you this place."

"Yes, yes—never mind that," said Caine-Hammond hastily. "I wanted to know how things are going in the village."

"Too much hell, *miché*!" the young fellow burst out, evidently full of his own wrongs. "It them Pappa Oppellou. What for he no give me my place, eh? Why he no give me them girl, Lalla, hah? Why he all time light them fire

for manacac rock, just like I no be there at all?"

"Who is he?" whispered Dominick.

In his gleaming half nudity, the young man looked some pagan creature of the woods, the product of some totally different form of life. There was amusement in Caine-Hammond's eyes as he replied:

"This is Gabriel—more commonly Gabou—chief claimant of the remains of the Carib tribe."

"Chief claimant?"

"Yes. There's a mix-up in the title—quite a romantic story. You'll probably hear it if you stay at all in the island," said the other carelessly.

"*Miché!*" Gabriel's interruption came in a growl of anger. "Look! See I speak true talk! Them old man, he make them fire for now!"

He was pointing upward to the collar of clouds now close upon them, shutting off the view of the higher peaks. Through a rift of the vapors came a glimpse of a ridge remote against the stars, and on it the glowing spot of a distant fire.

"Why for he do so like, eh?" demanded Gabriel. "Them fire, he for call manacac back—and me be there all time!"

"And if he did call another manacac back, what then?" asked Caine-Hammond in lazy teasing, and Gabriel shook with fury.

"Our law, he say if be two manacac, they go fight so one be dead!"

"None of that!" Caine-Hammond shot at him. "It's *our* law here, not yours, and if you don't keep it, you'll hang in Destries jail!" He turned to Dominick with a shrug. "A nice, elemental bit of goods! But I say, now you are so far and Gabriel is so providentially here, why not go on up to the Crater Lake with him? You could reach it by sunrise. By George, what a chance! I wish it had been mine!"

Your first tropical dawn seen from Morne Garou! I have to leave you here, anyhow. That's Tempest Vale, down yonder."

He pointed to a wide valley far below, dim under the moon, with a single light glowing in it. Tempest Vale! Dominick quivered again at the nearness, wondering on whom that light might be shining. On Josephine, as thrillingly awake as he? Or on her father? Whichever it was, he suspected that he himself was very present in their thoughts. "A few days," Josephine had said. Anything was welcome to shorten the monotony of that waiting.

"All right, I'll go up with the fellow," he said, wheeling his horse to the Carib's side.

"Gabou, this is my friend. Salute him," ordered Caine-Hammond, smiling as the Carib took Dominick's hand and laid it on his own head. "I'd like to have a photograph of that. The contrast is so complete, and yet—the colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady— I wonder if the same applies to men?"

"Universal brotherhood never appealed much to me," laughed Dominick.

"Nor to me, either," said Caine-Hammond. "Well—*buon viaggio*."

"*A riverdici,*" Dominick responded, riding after his guide. "Is it also a case of '*lasciate ogni speranza?*'"

There was silence, broken only by the pad of the Carib's bare feet and the swish of broad, dew-laden leaves, as they turned into a narrow trace. Then, from the road below, Caine-Hammond's voice floated up, drawlingly amused:

"Oh, hope as much as you like. You'll never guess the reality."

He rode on down toward Tempest Vale, his lips set in a smile that deepened as there occurred to him a passage from Goethe's "Faust." He repeated it aloud, with a glance at the misty heights of the mountain, mys-

teriously mantled in the cloak of the high woods, veiled with clouds:

"If only by this key he something learn! I'm curious to see—if he'll return."

He smiled again at the thought of that strangely contrasted pair struggling upward toward the Crater Lake.

"Well, the young fool *would* have it," he muttered.

CHAPTER IV.

The sun was already up when Caine-Hammond rode across the glaring cane fields of Tempest Vale, alive with the bustle of crop time. In and out of the swell of the land wound a tiny railway, its trains of trucks, piled high with golden cane, pulled along by vibrating motors. Off across the fields rose the sugar mill, the white walls and tall chimneys giving it the look of a battleship plowing a sea of vivid green. Carefully to windward of it was "the Great House," inclosed in a shell of jalousied balconies, its gardens, cool with shadows of tamarinds and mangoes, like a green spray about its base.

Tempest Vale was the show estate of the island, and above all Caine-Hammond liked its sense of ordered bustle and the efficiency of a high civilization. It spoke to him of that white dominance which could take the savage fecundities of this land and bring them down in subjection before it. No one knew better than he how quickly, if that ordered hand were once relaxed, the place would revert to wildness, swamped under the avalanches of vegetation sweeping down from the mountain.

On the steps Arthur Tempest awaited him, trim in morning white, with the narrow feet of one who considers walking a disgrace—and the equally narrow mind that is apt to accompany such a viewpoint; for the rest, a pleasant, courteous gentleman, provided one refrained from treading on the sensitive toes of his prejudices.

"I cannot say how welcome you are," he said, wringing Caine-Hammond's hand. "Of all people, you are the one I most wished to see just now. The nigger brought your things an hour ago. Now a bath first. Ramdien will attend you. Then breakfast on the west gallery.

"You probably know why I was so urgent to see you just now," he said, as Caine-Hammond joined him later on the gallery, where the shadow of the house and a puff of breeze from the sea gave an effect of coolness. "You came down on the *Essequibo*, did you not?"

"I did."

There was a silence, of amusement on Caine-Hammond's part; on the other's, that of a proud reluctance to ask the question which his visitor would not help him to avoid. At last it came:

"Well?" There was a reddening irritation. "You must know what I mean?"

"There are so many things you might mean."

"Is it—he?"

"I'm afraid so."

"You talked with him?"

"A little."

Arthur Tempest paced nervously up and down the gallery, avoiding the other's eyes.

"What the devil does the fellow want?" he burst out.

"To do him justice, I don't think he wants anything, or even knows that there is anything he might want."

"Then why does he come here?"

"I believe it was just an unconscious sort of homing instinct."

"Home! A pretty sort of home he'll find!" sneered Arthur Tempest. He paced again, struggling with another reluctance. "Good God! What a miserable, unforeseen chance that—Josephine—"

"It was unfortunate that Miss Tempest should happen to be on board the

same boat," Caine-Hammond agreed, with an irritating mildness.

"Unfortunate! It was horrible! How much do you know?"

"Very little, really."

"She actually considers herself engaged to him!"

"Ah?" Caine-Hammond's eyebrows lifted with one of the lazy little thrusts he could not deny himself. "And is—history—to repeat itself at Tempest Vale?"

"If that came from any one else—" said Arthur Tempest, whitening dangerously.

"My dear man, it's no use calling in a doctor and then shamefacedly refusing to show the place that hurts."

"I suppose not, but I am so upset! Curse the fellow! Just put yourself in my place. My only daughter, six years away from me, and our first meeting is embittered by this!"

"Surely Miss Tempest is open to reason."

"She won't discuss it at all. One would think—hang it!—that I was actually incapable of discussing it rationally with her. She seems to imagine that I am a—a child in such matters."

Arthur Tempest stopped, his face clouded by an almost pathetic bewilderment, and Caine-Hammond's eyes flickered with the smile he denied his lips. It amused him, the spectacle of this elderly Creole gentleman, so long a widower as to be almost a bachelor, steeped in all the prejudices and traditions of the island, suddenly confronted, in his own daughter, by the phenomenon of a modern young woman.

"You have, of course, told her the circumstances?" he said.

"Told her! Do you realize what you are suggesting? Do you imagine that I—her father—would stain the ears of a young girl—a white girl—my own child—with such a story?"

Caine-Hammond smothered another smile as he remembered Josephine, with

her keen, cool eyes, a pile of books by her deck chair—Maeterlinck, D'Annunzio, a volume of the latest Russian, Bergson, and, for relief, a copy each of *Blague* and the *Smart Pup*.

"But she will have to know some time," he objected.

"God forbid! I sent her away to keep the story from her, and now I shall keep her in Tempest Vale until I can hand her over to some man of our own order, who will guard her from all such knowledge."

"That's slightly archaic, you know," Caine-Hammond warned. "Frankly, I doubt whether she will consent to just that program."

"My daughter will consent to anything that is fitting for a lady."

"I think you will find that the young women of to-day are more tolerant than you suspect. I doubt if she would feel it so keenly."

"What? A Tempest—my daughter—not feel the disgrace of such a thing? Again I say—God forbid!"

"God forbid what?" came a voice from the doorway, cool and clear as a dash of cold water across Arthur Tempest's turgid sentiments.

Josephine came in, fresh from her morning ride in her white habit, her face vividly alight.

"Oh—how do you do, Mr. Caine-Hammond? Good of you to come so soon. Good morning, dad. Why this appeal to the deity so early in the day?"

She took off her broad Panama, unconcernedly stabbing the pins through it and ruffling the red-gold masses of her hair. Her father frowned slightly.

"My dear, in the island ladies hardly remove—"

"My dear dad, in the island, according to you, ladies hardly do so many things that I think the poor things must have a hard time all round." She laughed. "Are they permitted to eat breakfast? I hope so, for I'm ravenous."

She sat down, palely outlined against the vegetation outside, the curving stem of a palm rising from green and blood-red masses of caladium. She seemed coolly unheeding of all the strangeness about her—the clatter of the cocorite plumes in the breeze, the soft tread of the barefooted coolie servants, the scent of the drying cane trash wafted in from the fields. She seemed to look on it all much as a young woman in a private car might look at the Colorado Desert—something interestingly queer, but with which she had no real concern or point of contact.

"I know you've been talking of me," she challenged. "What is it?"

"Josephine," her father began, balancing with suppressed impatience on his plump, narrow feet, "again I must say that the ladies of the island——"

"My dear dad," Josephine retorted, with a smiling, good-humored finality, "I think I'll find out what the ladies of the island do from the ladies of the island themselves. I rather suspect that they know more about it than you do. Am I not right, Mr. Caine-Hammond?"

"Entirely—from the viewpoint of a larger place," he answered. "But, after all, this is a colony—a black colony—and we must observe the rules."

"Why especially in a black colony?"

"Because in these places the white dominion rests so largely on the reputation of its women. Things that would not be thought of in London or New York would set the niggers here to talking."

Josephine's chin rose in a proud resentment.

"You mean that we—intelligent, cultured people—must order our conduct according to the ignorance of those whom we rule?"

"That is the penalty of dominion. If you doubt it, read the history of any reigning family—and especially of its women."

Josephine was silent, her eyes stormy

with rebellion, her tone bitter when last she spoke:

"Yes. Men have always used women to pay their debts for them. There's little else to history but just that fact."

"Josephine!" her father interjected, but she faced him in a way that showed Caine-Hammond how great had been the strain of their meeting after her years in the greater world.

"What else are you proposing to do with me?" she asked.

"I only wish to guard your own ignorance."

"But I don't want to be guarded. I want to be treated as an intelligent human being, with a life of my own to live. All I ask is to be convinced, and that is just what you will not do."

"There are things it is impossible to tell a young, unmarried girl."

"Since those are the very things most vitally important to a young, unmarried girl, they're the very things that she should be told."

"Oh—by the way—not that I wish to change the conversation at all," Caine-Hammond broke in, with a sort of lazy, concealed malice, "but I saw the mysterious cousin of the *Essequibo* last night."

"You saw him!" Josephine exclaimed. "How did that happen?"

"I called on him."

She frankly considered him, with no pretense of disguising her curiosity.

"I'm wondering just why you did that."

"Sheer good nature," he replied, meeting her glance with a complete innocence. "I thought he might be feeling a bit strange, and so he was. I took pity on him and asked him to ride with me. He came halfway here, and then turned off to go up to the Crater Lake."

"The Crater Lake—you sent him up there!" exclaimed Arthur Tempest, with a look of meaning of which Caine-

Hammond remained deliberately unaware.

"Yes, I thought it would be rather a novel experience for him."

"But isn't it dangerous going up there at night?" asked Josephine.

"Not in his case. I was able to arrange a guide for him—a Carib boy called Gabriel."

"You sent him up with—Gabou?"

Arthur Tempest stared, with a sort of reluctant admiration, until Josephine glanced suspiciously at the two.

"I don't know anything about it," she said slowly, "but again I'm wondering just why you did—whatever it was you really did."

"It was hardly safe for him to go up alone," Caine-Hammond explained.

She looked at him again, spreading her hands in a gesture of half-bafflement.

"You interest me, rather," she confessed. "I believe you may be a little dangerous—and that is always interesting, you know. Yes," she continued, as Caine-Hammond's eyebrows went up in question, "I believe you are one of those men who do things in a feminine fashion."

"And are they dangerous?"

Their eyes silently challenged each other, oblivious of Arthur Tempest's fuming at this, to him, unaccustomed "battle of the sexes." In his scheme of things, one sex had no battle at all, and men were men and women purely feminine—whatever it was he meant by that.

"Always dangerous—especially to themselves," Josephine replied.

"I should think the danger would be to the bystanders," Caine-Hammond laughed. "A peculiarly feminine trait is never to hit what they aim at."

"The most feminine characteristic is never to seem to be aiming at what they are about to hit," she retorted.

"But wherein is the danger of that?" he asked.

2

"Because there is one thing that you men never seem to learn, and that is never to try feminine methods on feminine creatures—especially women. They know so much more about those things than you do."

She was vividly alive, heightened by the little passage of arms. Caine-Hammond looked from her to that glowing landscape outside of which she seemed so unconscious, wondering if she would be strong enough to resist the influences all about her. After all, she was West Indian born and there were hidden mysteries of prejudice, stamped in the very blood, which the air of the island seemed to poultice out in its people. He wondered grimly what they might have poulticed out in Dominick on that midnight climb to Morne Garou.

To Dominick himself, the night had been one of sheer enchantment, as he clung with tightened knees to the straining flanks of his horse, laboring up the steep trace in the wake of the Carib—a tangle of vegetation, dew dripping, of unbelievable shapes; bars of moonlight between the trees; the cry of night birds; the patter of monkeys in the mysteries of the tree roof overhead; an impassable lacing of tangled creepers; an assailing gamut of strange fragrances. Then the moonlight dimmed, as gradually the cloud collar took hold of them, at first a mere sensation, then a thickening veil that blotted out all form. A region of half light, full of enormous shapes of mist drifting impalpably between the trees; then glimpses of the stars again; and all at once he was above the clouds, in a more thinly wooded region, looking down on a white floor of vapor with terrifying gaps in it, like trapdoors to the pit in the shining floor of some heaven.

The island had disappeared. There was only the billowing spread of clouds, white under the moon, up through which pushed the serrated ridge of the

mountain, its peaks already grayed by the dawn.

The sky had blued with the sun as he reached the top, amid a forest of palm trees, their smooth gray columns, fifty, eighty feet high, supporting a cathedral roof of arched plumage. And in the center, cupped in the hollow of the long dead crater, nearly a mile across, still and blue as a sapphire between its palm-clad shores, lay the lake.

To Dominick it seemed the most beautiful place in all the world, as perhaps it is, that Crater Lake of Tabuga, cloud cut from the rest of the earth, flaunting its loveliness in the face of the eternal sky.

What he could not understand was the tearing ache it seemed to bring back in his brain. He looked at Gabriel, a graven statue of living bronze. It almost seemed that he could remember just such a figure, feel again the warm strength of the arms, tossing him—he was somehow very small—high up into a world of sun and flashing green.

A girl came down the steep trace to the shores of the lake, a slim, coppery little creature, with a mass of dusky hair and the face of a kitten that was yet a woman. She stood regarding them, in a shaft of sunlight, outlined against a blaze of scarlet creeper, her single garment of bright cotton looped high about her hips, on her head a basket of purple fruit.

Probably the village coquette, Dominick thought, noting her pout at sight of Gabriel, the trailing glance of her eyes across himself. There was an unintelligible patter between the two, and Gabriel's look at him was sullen. Then, with a toss of her head, the girl went on, flauntingly sure-footed, as straight under her load as a Greek caryatid.

Gray huts stood under the green-gold shade of the palm trees, formed of palm logs set on end and thatched with the dull silver of dried fronds. Some brown, half-nude people, men and

women, moved about them. There was an odor of wood smoke and of cooking. Piles of newly woven baskets lay drying in the sun.

In front of one of the huts stood an old man, in a pair of cotton trousers, his torso shrunken and withered, his twisted legs and arms as long as those of an ape, on his seamed face the ineradicable subtlety of a priest. Catching sight of him, Dominick scrambled from his horse, running toward him in an inexplicable urge. He was very small again, barefooted, rather unsteady on fat little legs. His voice surprised him as he heard it calling out; it ought to have been the treble of a child. That ache back in his brain had cracked now, and through it, though he could not tell why, came a cry:

"Pappa Oppellou, I am here!"

Dimly he heard the old man's reply, with the wondering joy of one who at last sees that for which he has long waited.

"Zomingay—he be come!"

The rest of that day was as a dream in which he was two persons, one himself and one a child, trying to bridge the gap between the two. He understood it now; he had seen it all from the moment when he stood in the place to which the old man had forced his shaking limbs to guide him—Morne Rose, the highest point of all the island, a thousand feet above even the Crater Lake, poised between the white floor of the clouds and an infinity of stainless sky.

A single circle of young palm trees, rising, slender and pliant, from a flood of golden lilies, stood like a guardian ring of mountain maidens, arching their fronds as a shelter above a single shaft of red lava. Wonderingly, instinctively bareheaded, Dominick gazed on it alone, waved on ahead by old Oppellou, who stood without, as one who had no right to enter there. His fingers shaking in excitement, Dominick traced the letters

on the shaft, crumbling under sun and rain, obscured by masses of ferns:

Here in the Spot She Loved so Well

Lies

JOSEPHINE TEMPEST

of Tempest Vale,

Born 1865—Died 1891.

For Seven Years Wife of
DOMINGUEZ GABRIEL,

Mancac of Tabuga,

Hereditary Chief of the Caribs.

CHAPTER V.

Dominick understood it now—that exquisite face of the miniature, with its look of mutinous destiny; Caine-Hammond's veiled warnings; Arthur Tempest's cold dislike. Probably they considered such a heritage a disgrace.

He felt no disgrace himself; rather, it gave him a sense that, like the palms overhead, he was rooted in all this vital glory about him, instinct with the mysterious forces of sun and earth. Reverently he bent to the name upon the shaft. What a life must hers have been up here in this high-hung place, cut off by the clouds from all the jarring influences of civilization, alone with the man she loved!

She must have loved him. There came a dim realization of the step she had taken, setting aside all thought of race and position, flying to the mountain with the Carib, carried along in those arms whose warm, dark strength he had remembered. It gave him a doubled emotion, one of hope, for if one Josephine Tempest had followed the man she loved, why not another?

There was so much to know, to be gathered slowly from Oppellou's broken English, prone on the warm earth before the hut, the blue glint of the lake between the fronded palm-tree pillars.

"My father, where is he?" he asked eagerly.

"He dead long time. He be killed for

hurricane. Then Ma-am Zozéphine, she die, too, and Miché Tempit, he come for take you."

"And who is the chief now?"

"Them white man, they say, 'Pappa Oppellou, you priest. Now you be chief who time that Gabou, he young boy. When he be man, he be mancac.'"

"Gabou? That's the fellow who brought me up here." Vaguely Dominick suspected Caine-Hammond's humor of the night before. "Why should he be the mancac?"

"Gabou for you brother."

"What?" cried Dominick. "Is he my mother's son, also?"

"No, he you fodd'a son," returned the old man, unmoved, scratching at his bare back. "Mancac have plenty wife."

Dominick chilled, remembering that proud woman of the miniature. So there were other things up here than just glory of sun and sky; things that must have been bitter to the woman who had renounced so much to follow the man she loved. Small wonder that women cling so to form and custom, since the inevitable law is that the woman must follow the man and partake of his state of life.

"Now yott come, you be mancac for us," pleaded Oppellou, laying caressing hands on Dominick's knees. "Five year, now, I been light them fire for mancac rock and sing them song for bring you back."

"Why do you want me instead of Gabou?"

"It more better. You Ma-am Zozéphine son; he mother Carib woman."

The prestige of white blood was at work, and the old priest desired a genuine chief. Thrilled as he was at the discovery, Dominick almost laughed as he thought of that larger life that was his and from which he had but stepped for a little while. To be the petty chief of a vanishing people held no inducements. From where he lay, he looked at the women of the old man's family,

bent over the basket weaving that seemed the one industry of the place—Meena, the wife, gnarled and wrinkled, and a girl who was probably their daughter; the same girl, he saw, whom he had encountered on the trace.

"What do you say, Meena?" he called lazily. "Shall I stay and be mancac?"

"Ah, hush!" grumbled the old man. "Them thing be man talk. Women no sabe that."

"But in my country, we always ask the women," said Dominick. "How about it, Meena?"

"Me think you stay," she answered, without raising her head from the work, "and me think you go."

"Right whichever way it turns out," laughed Dominick. Then he grew more grave. "Meena, did you know my mother?"

"Aha, me been sabe Ma-am Zozéphine." The old woman nodded. "Me been nurse her who time she piccanie born."

"What? Me?" he demanded.

"Ma-am Zozéphine, she no have but one piccanie," answered Meena.

"A-h, no talk for them," grumbled Oppellou uneasily. "Woman too much foolish. No be right for mancac hear woman talk."

"And how about that, Meena?" Dominick called, in amused persistence, and the old woman bent her head again over her basket.

"Man talk, woman talk—them thing no be same."

Her answer was the essence of submission, but Dominick surprised, behind Oppellou's fussy old back, a long look between the woman and the girl, as of some secret understanding that needed no speech. It made him wonder how much, for all its contemptuous setting aside, "woman talk" might not have to do with things upon the mountain.

But he had so much to think of—this beautiful, long dead mother; this father, dimly seen in dreams; Gabriel, his

half brother, looming sullenly on the outskirts; himself—"Mancac Dominick;" and another Josephine Tempest. Small wonder that her father had been so disturbed at his appearance. But this would be so different.

The afternoon had dreamed away and the shadows of the palms were long upon the ground before he realized it.

"I must go!" he cried, springing up. But old Oppellou laid detaining hands upon him.

"No—no! Zomingay, you stay for us!"

"But I must go," Dominick insisted, shaking the hands off. "I'll come back, but I must go now."

He was eager for Destries, in a need for its more familiar background of civilized things in which to think, to sort himself out from this bewildering swirl that seemed to have caught his whole life.

"Tell them to bring me my horse," he ordered.

Meena and the girl were busy over the fire; there was a smell of cooking in the air, and spirals of smoke ascended under the palms. It was the time of "woman talk" of food and eating.

"You stay!" begged Oppellou again, and Dominick, bent on teasing, turned to the girl.

"Shall I stay?" he asked.

"Me no care," she answered, with a toss of her head, at the same time darting him a glance.

Dominick laughed. He had seen so exactly the same tactics before amid such different surroundings.

"Then if you don't care, I'll go."

The girl stamped her foot, elaborately turning her back, but old Meena whisked the cover from the earthen cooking pot, letting out the savors of its contents.

"Why for go now?" she asked, stirring vigorously. "Soon time moon be

up, Gabou get you horse, take you for Destri'. You stay—you eat."

The odors of that pot were irresistible, reminding Dominick of his forgotten hunger. Laughing, he sat down, eating with Oppellou, served in state by the two women.

There was talk of his horse. In silent fashion, the people of the village disappeared. Oppellou droned on until, called by Meena, he, too, left.

The moon was up, sending shafts of light down the aisles of the palms, their fronds rustling overhead, jeweled with stars. Great spathes of flowers, twenty feet long, hung down in purple and gold, dripping mysterious honey distilled of sun and rain.

Then, shrill across the silence that wrapped the place, came the cry of a bird—four long-drawn notes, like a warning, followed by a run down the scale as in a burst of laughter at its own solemnity. Dominick stirred uneasily at it, feeling the austerity of the first notes. But that laughing scale tipped the balance.

"Take—care! Take—care!" it seemed to cry. Then came a silvery shower of: "Oh, what—oh, what—oh, what—oh, what's the odds?"

It fitted the place, fitted the night that seized the senses like a drug of beauty, stilling the mind, leaving only the flesh awake. He became aware that he was not alone. It was the girl who had returned, and she stood there, her kitten face alight under her dusky hair, her loose gown slipping from one shoulder.

"You have my horse?" Dominick demanded.

"They no find him yet."

"It is lost?"

"Maybe so, *miché*."

She spread her hands in complete detachment, and he exclaimed, irritated:

"But I must get to Destries at once!"

"Why for?"

There was no use in attempting to make her understand the need that was

upon him just then of Destries and its civilization. One couldn't think up here on the mountaintop; one could only feel. In the outer ring of darkness beyond the dying glow of the fire, he caught hints of a gliding shadow that might have been Gabriel. He would have liked to make friends with his father's son, but the Carib had turned on him a smoldering distaste.

"What is your name?" he asked the girl.

"Me name Chatoue, but most me be call Lalla."

"Then go call Gabou," Dominick ordered. "Tell him I want my horse at once."

"No, you no go," Lalla protested.

"But I must go some time."

"Why for? Why no stay be mancac for us?"

"Why don't you want Gabou for mancac? Don't you like him?"

"Me been like him, yes; but now ——"

She shot him a glance that flatteringly finished the sentence for her. Shaking her cloud of hair over her face, she sank down beside him, pressing against him with the lithe warmth of some beautiful animal. To Dominick, it seemed that he could almost hear her pur.

"Why do you want me to be mancac?"

"Me modda—that old Meena—she want you."

"And why does she want me?"

"Me fodd—a he want."

"So it's because old Oppellou wants me that you want me, too?" he teased.

"Me modda, she say, 'Oppellou, he old; he forget. Me be old, but woman no forget. Oppellou want Zomingay for mancac; then me sabe how make him stay.'"

"And it's just because of your mother that you want me?"

She shook her hair over her face, hiding it from him. It might have been

the throbbing of her heart, so close to him, but it was as if there were a pulse in the night, of which he was just a part, beating in unison to its quickened vibrations. The bird call came again, with its solemn warning, but once more the laughing scale tipped the balance, its down-falling notes caught and tossed into the air in a shower of silver recklessness.

"Why do you want me to stay?" he whispered.

"Me modda, she say, 'He go be white mancae and you be child of priest.'"

"And the child of the priest?"

"She most time be mancae wife, *miché*."

"Mancac have plenty wife." The recollection of the old man's unconcerned phrase floated through Dominick's brain. With it came the vision of Josephine, like a cool breath across a fever; and, following it, that of that other Josephine, his mother, facing the humiliations of her unappreciated sacrifice. Yet such was the charm that it was like tearing his own flesh as he put Lalla aside and rose.

"Go tell Gabou to get my horse."

"Them horse, he be gone," she answered sullenly.

"Gone where?"

"Me no sabe. Me modda, she tek him."

So it had all been arranged! Dominick reddened as he remembered that look between the woman and the girl. This was "woman talk," potent in spite of old Oppellou's contempt.

"Then I'll walk to Destries. Call Gabou to show me the way."

"You go, *miché*?"

"Yes, I'm going now."

His tone was unshakable, and Lalla sank down, her pliant body riven by a storm of sobs, perhaps the most dangerous assault of all. With masculine awkwardness at a woman's tears, Dominick bent over her. At his touch, she sprang up, a little fury, beating at him

with her fists. He caught her wrists, holding her off from him, laughing as she writhed in his grasp. Then, with a sudden twist, she bent, and her teeth closed on his arm. He released her, gasping in surprise:

"You little wild cat!"

"Pig!" Lalla hissed. "To-morrow all them girl go laugh for me!"

So it had been arranged, he saw, seeing the significance of the deserted silence of the village. It matched, in its naïve frankness, the insidious charm of the elements all about. A wave of anger came up in him.

"Did you think you could keep me that way?" he demanded.

"Oh—*miché*—*miché*!"

It was a cry of appeal, and her hands stole round his neck, clinging to his shoulders, to his shirt, carelessly open. As he wrenched himself free, he felt something cut into his flesh, then snap, but did not pause to see what it was, flinging blindly off into the moon-riddled darkness, intent only on reaching Tempest Vale and Josephine.

It was almost morning when at last he came upon the wide, fan-shaped valley sloping to the sea, which Caine-Hammond had shown him the night before, wearily dragging himself across the unfamiliar cane fields from which the Great House rose like a white cliff with green strata of jalousied balconies.

Circling warily in the shadows, Dominick wondered which of those green-slatted eyries was Josephine's. With a shiver of excitement, he thought that even so, thirty years before, his father must have sought his mother. A queer repeat—Dominguez—Dominick, each come down from the Crater Lake, lurking under the gloom of the tamarinds, seeking a Josephine Tempest! Seeking a signal, there came to his lips the cry of the crater bird and he whistled it softly, insistently. If she were there, she must surely feel his presence.

A shutter stirred in the upper story.

Heedless of his appearance—coatless, torn by the thorns of the high woods—Dominick stepped forward into the moonlight as there came a low question from behind the slats:

"Who is there?"

"Josephine—it is I."

"Dominick! Oh, you shouldn't have come!"

"I couldn't help it. Josephine, I must speak to you."

"Wait! Go back to the shadows! I'll come down."

The jalouse quivered to a close; from behind it came the echo of a little laugh of excited daring. Silently Dominick waited under a tamarind, until at last, and all at once, she was there at his side, gathered into his arms.

Round them the night stirred faintly with hints of the dawn, heavy with the fragrance of the frangipani shrubs. He looked at her in breathless relief, as if she brought safety. It was all so different from that hectic wooing of the crater—the ordered dignity of house and gardens; the girl, white-robed, white-skinned, like a symbol of that inner daintiness that showed even in her kiss; a poise of restraint, not lack of emotion.

"How I have ached for you!" he murmured.

"And I for you!"

She held him off, feeding her eyes upon him. Then came a cry of dismay:

"But where have you been, to be like this?"

"I lost my horse on the mountain, and I had to walk here."

"Oh, you poor boy!" She regarded him with maternal anxiety. "What shall I do with you? You ought to be attended to. You may get fever. But I can't take you to the house. My father would—"

"I've something to tell you of that," he interrupted gravely. "I understand now why he so dislikes me, for I know now who my father was."

Warned by his tone, she clung to him.

"No, don't tell me—not yet!"

"But I must. I'm not ashamed of it. I see the glory of it too much, the primeval health and strength."

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "Who was your father?"

"The Mancac Dominguez Gabriel."

"A—a *Carib*!"

She drew away from him, her eyes widening in an amazement that deepened almost to horror. Her next words cut him like a knife with their unconscious arrogance of blood:

"A *brown man*!"

"Josephine, don't look at me like that!" he cried involuntarily.

"Oh, why did you tell me?" she moaned, hiding her eyes. "You, a *capre*—a—a half-caste."

Like the gray of the dawn above them, more a dimming of the splendor of the night than the promise of the day, a bleakness seized on him.

"But I'm the same as when you first met me, Josephine."

"You don't understand! Oh—after all—it is born in me!"

She was as straight as a white pillar and as hard. As he looked at her, Dominick understood the aloofness of this white race, throned above the colored swarms in a pride of blood that made no distinctions. Like a blow between the eyes came the realization that he could no longer regard himself as one of them.

"But I am," he declared, answering his own thought. "My training, my bringing up—all have been white. Josephine, can't you see the difference?"

"It's the—the blood!" she moaned, turning away. "It means so much to a woman!"

"But I myself, do I mean nothing?"

She looked at him, waveringly torn, all her acquired training of the greater world, even her love itself, trembling in the balance against that bitter preju-

dice stamped into her very flesh by more than a century of island heredity. Of all men, she would have said that he was white to the core, desirable in his youth, strength, and that something of unseen mind that goes beyond even those.

"I can't believe it!" she murmured.

"Can you face it?" he demanded somberly.

"I must!" she cried. "For—oh—I love you so much!"

He had won. Dominick knew that as he drew her to him, soothing the storm that ensued. He wondered how many such pleadings and surrenders that same spot might not have seen between the pair who had been his parents. Above all, he must guard Josephine from the bitternesses that had shadowed the life of his mother.

Like the passing of that bleakness in him, the dayspring welled about them, flashing in color from sky and branch and flower. It was a voice that recalled them, lazily warning:

"Excuse me if I seem to intrude, but you're in plain view from the house, and Miss Tempest's father is already stirring."

It was Caine-Hammond, long and cool, his eyes as drawlingly amused as his tones. Too angry for embarrassment, Dominick interposed between Josephine and the intruder.

"Well, now you know!" he said hotly.

"What I'm wondering is—how much do you two know?" said the other.

"I know all that you sent me to the Crater Lake to find out."

"Then that simplifies matters."

"Why couldn't you have told me on board ship?" asked Dominick.

"It was none of my business until—I mean, there are things that no one will believe until they see them."

Josephine spoke, coolly mistress of herself:

"Then, since you're really responsible for Mr. Tempest's being here just at

this moment, I'll ask you to look after him for me, Mr. Caine-Hammond: Mr. Tempest needs a bath, a rest, and, afterward, a horse for his return to Destries. As I prefer that my father should not know of Mr. Tempest's visit just at present, I'll delegate the task of host to you."

With that, and a long look at Dominick, she left them, stepping completely out of the picture.

When Caine-Hammond next saw her, at breakfast, he marveled again. Dainty, gayly unconcerned, she might have just arisen from a night of dreamless sleep. Not until they were alone did she betray the slightest recollection of anything untoward.

"I executed your commission," he smiled.

"Thank you. I thought I could rely upon your cleverness. Besides—you rather deserved it."

"Because I sent him to the Crater Lake or because I—interrupted?"

"Exactly," she replied.

"Mr. Tempest had a bath in the pond and is now sleeping the sleep of the just—or, at least, of the healthily tired—at the overseer's house."

"The overseer's!" she exclaimed. "But—the overseer is—colored."

"I hardly thought that that mattered with him. I mean—"

Caine-Hammond stammered with visible embarrassment at his slip, and Josephine flushed as the shot went home with all its implied slur on Dominick. Straightly regarding him, she met only that glimmer of amusement that habitually veiled him—even from himself, she suspected irritated.

"You can inform my father, if you think it right to do so."

"I hardly think it any of my business."

"And was it your business to send Mr. Tempest to the Crater Lake?"

"Yes. As attorney general of the

island, I have direct administration of all the tribal affairs of the Caribs."

"Mr. Tempest hardly comes under that administration, does he?"

"Officially, I can make no distinctions." Then Caine-Hammond went on, with the too great haste of one trying to redeem an error: "But really, of course, he is different—and in his case—half white as he is—there should be very little danger."

"Danger of what?" she asked whitely.

Caine-Hammond rose, still more embarrassed.

"Please forget it. I'm saying too much."

But to forget was the one thing that Josephine could not do, for she knew, too well, what he had meant. He had touched that insistent mother fear which had reared itself in her own mind, which lies at the root of the dis-taste for mixed marriages—the cruel chances of heredity and the danger of racial "cast-backs" for children.

CHAPTER VI.

Near noon that day, Caine-Hammond, returning to Destries, reached the ridge where he had parted from Dominick two nights before.

Below him, in the high glare, the mountain fell away in forested slopes, painted as by a giant brush dipped in the colors of a peacock's breast. Between the twisted trunks of the groo-groo palms, the trace to the Crater Lake showed as a tunnel in the masses of foliage. He drew rein and paused, as down it came the sound of voices, a man's and a woman's, raised in dispute.

In the shade of the bamboos, he waited until they appeared—the girl Lalla, stepping lithely along under a head-borne load of woven baskets which she was taking to Destries for sale; behind her, flushed and sullen, Gabriel, tormented to a fury by her contemptuous eyes and stabbing lips.

At the sight of Caine-Hammond, he stopped, confused by the superior presence, but the girl stood her ground, sweeping the white man with a long, provoking glance, followed by an angry shrug as he looked her over, from head to foot, in amused understanding.

"Well, what's the trouble now?" he asked, after he had held them silent for several minutes.

"It them girl, *miché*!" Gabriel burst out. "And them white man you been send for lake with me!"

"Mr. Tempest is not a white man," replied Caine-Hammond. "His father was yours, also."

"Him look white to me," grumbled Gabriel.

"He is your elder brother and your chief."

"He no be mancac!" cried Gabriel. "Our law, he say—"

"I have told you that it is not your law, but ours—fool!" said Caine-Hammond. "Now what of the girl?"

"She no speak to me since them white man come."

"Well, I'm afraid there's no law that can make her do that," smiled Caine-Hammond. "What about it, Lalla? Why don't you speak to Gabou now?"

"Him no be mancac now," the girl returned scathingly.

"So that's it, is it? 'Who's Who in Tabuga.' What is it that has so exalted your social ideas, my dear?"

His words were as Greek to them, but they answered his meaning, standing before him, supple and bronze, their eyes on his in unquestioning submission to a master.

"Me see them white man make love last night, *miché*," said Gabriel, quivering in fury. "And look—see—them thing he been give her!"

He pointed a shaking finger at Lalla's neck, where the cotton garment fell away, exposing a bare shoulder, the swell of a breast, and, nestling by it, an

amethyst suspended by a broken chain of gold, mended with twisted grass.

Caine-Hammond stiffened in surprise, recognizing the pendant that Josephine had worn on board ship. The sight of it on that brown-gold flesh was damning evidence against Dominick.

"What for he give them thing, eh? Tell me that, *miché*!" said Gabriel.

"Ask Chatoue. She knows more about it than I do," returned Caine-Hammond grimly.

There was a flash from the girl's eyes. She knew what they were imagining; she knew even better what had actually taken place; and of the two, their suspicions were the less galling to her. Raising her arms, she eased the load upon her head, regarding them with a glance of the utmost insolence.

"What you think, heh? Me no be fit for mancac wife?"

There was a cry from Gabriel, an upraised fist, but Caine-Hammond's hand was in his shock of hair, hauling him ruthlessly back.

"Stop that, you puppy!"

For some moments, he regarded them, his eyes hard as he remembered Dominick as he had surprised him with Josephine that morning in the garden. All his pride of race rose in him in defense of the woman of his own blood. Josephine must know this before it was too late, but to tell her would be to embitter himself in her sight.

"If you can't make the girl love you, Gabou, that's your lookout," he said. "Where do you take your baskets, Lalla?"

"For Destri', *miché*."

Caine-Hammond looked at the amethyst, plain upon her breast.

"There's a white lady come to Tempest Vale," he said slowly. "I will send her some of your baskets as a present. Here, take this!" He flung the girl a coin worth more than her whole load. "Go now to Tempest Vale, ask for Ma-am Zozéphine, and say that she

must take her choice of all your baskets, do you understand?"

"Yes, *miché*, I go," Lalla returned, snatching at the coin.

"And, Gabou, you come with me. I'll keep you under my eye for a while."

With Gabriel padding at his stirrup, he rode on, the smile still upon his lips, his eyes staring straight ahead, not at the road, but at the picture of Lalla swinging down to Tempest Vale. For some miles, he rode in silence; then he spoke:

"Gabou, I've been thinking, and I told you wrong about that law."

"So be, *miché*?"

"Yes, I remember now. In the grant of King George III., which gave the crater lands to your people forever, it says that in all tribal matters between Carib and Carib, it is *your* law that shall prevail."

"Me no sabe them talk, *miché*."

"It means that, if there be two mancac, you shall settle it by your own law."

"Huh—me go remember that," grunted Gabriel.

Buttoned into her white habit, booted and spurred, Josephine was preparing for her afternoon ride when a servant brought word that "one *capra* gal be come for sell basket."

A Carib girl! Instantly Josephine was afire with curiosity to see a woman of this other race with which Dominick was so strangely connected. With feminine instinct, Lalla had arranged her dress to meet the white woman's eye, pulling the slipping gown about her shoulders, shaking down the skirt looped high about her hips for freedom in walking. Her eyes shyly downcast, she looked a little brown kitten as she delivered Caine-Hammond's message, and Josephine, amid her girlish delight at the unexpected present, scanned the bringer of it with a cool scrutiny mixed

with a little constriction about her heart. The creature was actually pretty!

The baskets pleased her, smooth, so closely woven as to hold water, patterned with allegorical forms whose meaning was lost in the past. She rewarded Lalla with a munificence for which she could not account except that—well, she was this girl's chieftainess, in a way. The thought made her laugh, and Lalla, her teeth shining in artless cupidity over her fistful of silver, laughed, too, forgetting her pose of modesty in a recovered naturalness. From beneath the slipping line of her dress flashed the purple fire of a jewel, and Josephine, in her new-found interest in all things Carib, pointed to it.

"What is that? Show me."

Lalla displayed it proudly, its sophisticated filigree setting in odd contrast to her brown skin.

"But that is not Carib," said Josephine, wondering at the little chill that assailed her.

"No, ma-am. One white man who come for Crater Lake been give me," purred Lalla, preening herself at the soothing lie.

"A white man!" echoed Josephine, and the chill settled like ice about her as she recognized the jewel.

"Yes, ma-am. Las' night he give me. One white man who come be manac for us. Me go be he wife."

"You lie! You stole that!"

It came from Josephine's lips like a white-hot missile, incapable of restraint, and Lalla cringed at the sound of it, suddenly sullen.

"No, ma-am. Me no lie. He been give me."

"When?"

"Las' night."

Like steel, Josephine's fingers closed on the brown arm, digging into the flesh until the girl squealed with the pain.

"You're lying! You're a thief! Tell me the truth!"

"No—no!" cried Lalla, terrified with

the vision of the jail that Caine-Hammond perpetually dangled over the heads of his native wards. "Me no t'ief! He been give me!"

Josephine released her hold, standing straight and still, her head hot, her heart cold within her. She did not realize it as yet; she dared not, keeping it deliberately at bay. Just across the drive was the very tamarind tree under which Dominick had clasped her in the dawn, and the frangipani bush whose fragrance had so intoxicated them as their lips had met. The memory of it was like fire upon her mouth, a fire of proud shame. Only a few hours before—her jewel—given by him—to this—for— She shut down on it, hearing her own voice as from a distance:

"I'll buy it. Here—take this!" She emptied her purse into the outstretched paw. "If you don't sell it to me, I'll—I'll—"

"No, no, ma-am," bubbled Lalla at the menace in the other girl's tone. "Me sell—you take. I no care."

She gathered up her baskets, clutching at the money; then, as if the touch of the coins reassured her, her manner changed. Josephine's agitation had betrayed too much, and Lalla, swinging her load upon her head, paused to survey the white girl with a glance that, for its scorching insolence, might have been the product of centuries of ancestors in the best of white society.

"Me think you be he woman, too," she sneered.

From Josephine the centuries of civilization that really lay behind her seemed to have dropped; the cool, poised girl of to-day was gone, and she stood in amazement at the violences that surged up in her. Action, swift and immediate, was her first need, and she turned to the astonished negro groom who stood near.

"My horse—at once!"

She was mounted now and riding off to some destination that she did not yet

know. Of course she had it now—the overseer's house, gay with paint amid the avocado trees that hid it from the Great House.

Dominick was still asleep, stretched on a cot on the gallery. Otherwise, the place seemed deserted behind its open doors. Looking down at the unconscious figure, Josephine wondered at men. He so didn't look it. It gave her a bitter feeling that never again could she believe a masculine semblance.

"Mr. Tempest!"

Dominick struggled up, rubbing from his eyes the sleep that still chained them.

"Yes—what is it? Why—Josephine!"

He sprang to his feet, his face alight; then stopped as he became aware of a new quality about her.

"I came to return you—this," she said scornfully, holding out the pendant.

He looked at it in astonishment. His entire innocence only added fuel to her fires, proof positive of his duplicity.

"Why—how did *you* get it?" he asked, with an unconsciously fatal emphasis.

"You hardly expected to see it in *my* hand," she said dryly. "Perhaps you weren't aware that you had—lost it."

"Yes, I knew that," he said, looking at her in bright puzzlement. "I found it out when I went swimming with Caine-Hammond this morning. Did you find it down by the pond? It must have slipped from my neck. I hunted and hunted. Of course I didn't let him know what I was looking for—but—"

He stopped, his fingers going in sudden suspicion to his neck, where a red welt showed the force of the chain before it had broken under Lalla's clutching fingers. A flush rose on his cheeks and he fumblingly repeated:

"You see—I must have dropped it when—"

"Spare me lies," said Josephine cruelly.

"Lies? Josephine!"

"Yes—lies! Do you mean to say

that you were going to tell me the truth?"

Dominick flushed again, seeing miserably that, of all things, the truth could not be told now.

"Listen, Josephine!" he pleaded earnestly. "What this is all about I don't know, but this is the truth—that I love you, that since I met you, there has been no thought for any one else, no act or deed that was not for you. As for this—he looked at the pendant hanging limply from her fingers, held as if it scorched them—"there's no truth about it that you might not know—if only you would."

"Then why don't you tell it to me?"

"That girl—"

"Ah, we're getting closer now!" she exclaimed, as he faltered in a man's taste for such a disclosure. "Go on."

"Josephine, won't you believe me when I tell you that my losing that was just an accident?"

"Certainly I will," she responded, with an invincible, glittering brightness. "I've seen the accident—an accident of the name of Lalla."

"You've seen her!" Dominick exclaimed, with a flat amazement that she could only interpret as guilt.

She wondered at the anger within her, rising afresh at the memory of Lalla's last, stinging look and words. The very fact that somehow she could not help loving him only intensified the pain of it, leaving no choice but to inflict an equal pain upon him.

"It was from her that I recovered the pendant. I don't blame her—or you. The blame is for me, for placing myself in such a position. All that you did was to answer the call of—your blood."

For an instant, she regarded him in a way that seemed to take the very skin from him; such a look as he himself had sometimes given to a presumptuous nigger. In a daze, he heard her last words:

"Since you have—worn—the pen-

dant, I no longer care to touch it. I will leave it for you to do with as you please."

She was gone, to the clink of the jewel falling to the floor. It was useless to attempt to call her back even if he had had the strength to speak.

Dominick sank back upon the cot, looking at the glittering trifle at his feet. So this was his heritage, with its domain of cloud and sky, its blue days and nights of enchantment!

A brown man—a half-caste—a thing of contempt!

Back at the Great House, Josephine found her father awaiting her, anxious as to her absence. Dragging herself up the steps, she went straight to him, abandoning herself to the arms he stretched out to her.

"Josephine—my dear—what is it?"

"I know it all," she said drearily. "I've heard the story, and I know who he is. Why didn't you tell me?"

"I wanted to shield you from such knowledge."

"Oh, shield! If only you would tell us the truth!" Josephine cried. "Tell me something now and tell me truly. Was she—my Aunt Josephine—happy in that life to which she went?"

"I'm afraid not. I could have forgiven much if only she had been, but there were—things—"

"I know some of those things, I think. You needn't tell me. Oh, you were right! The two races must always stand apart."

"I'm glad to hear you say that."

"I'm probably more West Indian than I had thought."

It was at the rambling, oddly tropical little hotel in Destries that Caine-Hammond sought Dominick that night. Since the body, with its needs, persists through the most emotional of states, Dominick had bathed, dressed, even dined in an unseeing, untasting sort of fashion. Lounging unhappily on the

gallery of his room, he looked around, as Caine-Hammond came out, with a flatly weary:

"Oh, is it you?"

"Yes. I wanted to see that you got back all right."

Beyond the fort, through the screening wild figs, the King's House showed a gleam of lights, and the sound of music came from it faintly. Caine-Hammond nodded toward it.

"The governor and Lady Haskins are giving a dinner dance. I ran away for half an hour to come and see how you were."

He lounged at Dominick's side, seemingly unaware of the coolness of his reception. He was in evening dress, and its slightly crumpled carelessness, like the casualness of his reference to the King's House, only emphasized the fact that it was habitual to him.

"Did you see Miss Tempest again?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I ask because I took the liberty of sending her a little present. I met some Caribs coming down with baskets, and I told one of the girls to take some down to Tempest Vale. Did she happen to like them?"

Caine-Hammond always forestalled things when he could. So that was how Josephine had seen Lalla, Dominick thought, but the openness of the information precluded any suspicion of motive on the other's part. Besides, how could Caine-Hammond know of the incidents at the lake?

"I know this must be rather a hard blow for you," the other went on.

"Why so?" asked Dominick.

"Well, when one has always thought one was white—I mean—" Caine-Hammond relapsed into one of those confusions with which he was apt to cloak the delivery of unpleasant truths. "But really—no one would suspect it, to look at you. Back in the States—"

"I'm not contemplating returning there just yet."

"You mean you're going to stay?" exclaimed Caine-Hammond. "I warn you, in all friendliness, that you'll be making things difficult, not only for yourself, but also for—Miss Tempest."

"I think we'll leave Miss Tempest's name out of it," said Dominick quietly.

Caine-Hammond knew now what he had come to find out. The tone had told him that his plan with Lalla had been successful. Since, owing possibly to that feminine streak that Josephine had divined in him, he could never resist pain, an added friendliness crept into his voice, and his hand fell on Dominick's arm.

"Take my advice. Go away. Give it up and forget."

Dominick stirred, vaguely touched by the contact.

"And if I don't?" he asked.

Caine-Hammond's hold tightened. He could sympathize with pain, all the more when it was he who dealing it, but back of it he never faltered.

"I would really advise you to go."

Dominick looked over the roofs of the town, veiled by the swaying coconut palms, tumbling down the hills to the landlocked waters of the bay; a place he had never seen until two days before, and yet, in some mysterious way, it had come to hold for him not only all his hitherto unknown past, but all his future as well.

"No; I'll just stick it out here," he said.

"But, man, you have nothing to hope for here," urged Caine-Hammond.

"I haven't any hope at all," Dominick replied. "All I know is that I must stay."

CHAPTER VII.

Dominick stayed, dragging through week after week of a curious isolation.

Outwardly he led the life of a white visitor, riding, exploring the island, din-

ing each evening in solitary state at the hotel. A perfect civility was his lot, a sort of blank courtesy that led no further. For the rest, he seemed suspended in a sort of social Mohammed's coffin, halfway between the two worlds of white and colored, with no place on which to step out.

There was a place ready, even anxious, to receive him, that halfway place of the halfway people, variously colored, laughing, often beautiful. But to join them meant a fall for which he was not yet ready.

There was also the Crater Lake, from which he kept steadily aloof. There was a place for him there, gathering about him the veils of illusion and the romantic rags of the past. But for that, again, he was not yet ready.

Josephine he mercifully never saw. Even the sound of her name did not reach him until, by odd chance, it fell from the lips of the most unlikely person of all, that strange "bird woman," as he called her, Ma-am Margaret.

He encountered her often at the old fort, which had become his favorite place in his lonely evenings. By day, she seemed to keep hidden in her cottage, a bandbox of a place on the slope below, vocal with bird trills, smothered in gold-and-crimson Crotons. Only at night would she steal out, summoned by her weird imaginings, circling the ramparts amid her living cloud of canaries.

That they should meet so often struck Dominick at times with unease; two misfits, he thought, the one of mind, the other of blood, meeting in the common solitude of the ostracized. She came to him one evening, looming through the purple shadows of the wild figs, her birds circling restlessly about her head as if in response to some concealed agitation.

"You stay too long on the island," she said abruptly.

"There are things that keep me here," Dominick replied.

"Ah, then you feel them? I told you so." Ma-am Margaret nodded with her air of tragic mysteriousness. "They are so strong—the things that are here. So many worlds meet and mix on this shore. I feel them to-night, for I had a visitor to-day—the first for years. I had thought that she had gone on long ago. I remember how it took all my hope away when they told me that Josephine Tempest was dead."

"Josephine—" breathed Dominick.

"Yes, she came to me to-day. Excuse me if I am a little strange this evening, for I can't understand it. She's dead, and yet she came to me, by day, and she was not like—these others all about us here."

Dominick shivered at the wildness of her eyes. Catching at a rope of white flowers about her neck, Ma-am Margaret inhaled the heady fragrance like a drug. He suspected that she was confusing the present Josephine—his Josephine—with that other of the grave on Morne Rose. With a lover's egotism, the living obscured the dead.

"How did she look?" he asked.

"Very beautiful—as she always was. So tall, so willful, so commanding, and in such bitter, bitter need—as I was, too! When I understood so well, how could I refuse? And Josephine Tempest always had her way."

"But this was to-day that she came," he reminded.

"Yes—yes," she murmured, confused. "But it seems so long ago—and yet to-day she could tell me nothing. She did not seem to remember or to understand, not even when I begged on my knees. But how could she forget such a thing as *that*? She couldn't, could she? No woman could."

"No, of course," Dominick answered, bent only on soothing.

"Perhaps it's not time yet," sighed Ma-am Margaret. "She was so willful—and then her red, red hair! That was why it was so necessary to have one

with hair like hers. And then she loved—and so did I—and we both so longed to keep the men we loved! But it was no use—no use—no use!"

She stopped, her eyes, terribly alive in her fleshless face, fixed on Dominick.

"They call me mad," she said simply. "But I am not. Shall I tell you what I am? I am dead."

Dominick shivered again. Never had he known her so eerie, gaunt in black and white amid her birds.

"When he died, I died, too, but they wouldn't let me pass. They turned me back to walk and walk, here where I sinned my sin, until that other comes back to me to set me free. Oh, my birds, go—bring me messages!"

With a fling of her hands, she scattered the birds in shrill flight, receiving them as they came back again, clamorous with song.

"You hear? They're telling me it will not be long—not long—so I must wait. Perhaps you, too, are waiting for something. But then all the world is doing that—all waiting for something. I never knew your name."

"My name is also Tempest," said Dominick.

"Tempest!"

It was a cry, and to quiet her alarm Dominick spoke again:

"I'm just a cousin—from America."

"A-h!" Ma-am Margaret drew back, with a long sigh of mingled relief and disappointment. "I almost thought—But then he was very, very small. I'm thinking too much to-night. I must wait—but not long—not long."

She passed on, trailing across the broken rampart like a darker shadow, crooning as she went:

"He will come! He will come! The new moon slants through the paths of the high woods and the pulse of the night is athrob. They will call him, for he is of them. They who go from here must always return, for this is the land of the comers back!"

So she left him, lost in her dreams, but that she had seen Josephine planted her firmly in Dominick's mind.

"What connection had Ma-am Margaret with my mother?" he asked, the next time he saw Caine-Hammond.

These meetings, always of the other's seeking as a salve for Dominick's pride, were his only experiences of companionship now. Sometimes they rode together, stopping, as to-day, for a plunge in the breakers on some lonely, exquisite beach.

"I don't quite know," Caine-Hammond replied. "In your mother's will—you can see it at the registry—she was left some money and a special recommendation to your uncle's care.

"I wish you'd do something definite about your official position," he went on, more briskly; "either take it or leave it."

"My official position?" asked Dominick. "I didn't know I had any."

"Certainly you have. By a royal decree, the Caribs were guaranteed certain tribal rights and lands, and the manac is as much a part of the island government as I am."

"And if I take it—what then?"

"You might make some money. There's sulphur up there on the Carib lands if you chose to work it."

"And beyond that?"

"Frankly—nothing."

Dominick glanced down at his bared body, smooth and white under the amber shade of the wind-blown coco palms. His bitterness rose in him.

"Why is it?" he demanded. "Look at me, stripped as I am; am I not as good a piece of flesh and bone as any?"

"Far better than I am," Caine-Hammond responded. "It is—the blood. We simply dare not let down the social bars."

"Why not?"

"Look about you, notice things, and think it over. And in your case espe-

cially—well—it was your mother who was the white. If you could only understand what that means to—the woman."

The silence lasted long, and Caine-Hammond was content to let this new viewpoint sink in. Not until they were mounted again did Dominick speak.

"If you don't mind, I'll go off alone for a while."

Where he went that afternoon he never knew. As Caine-Hammond had foreseen, his mind reacted to one sentence only—what it meant to the woman; what it would have meant—what, if those deathless hopes of his were ever realized, it would still mean—to Josephine to be allied to a man of mixed blood.

That evening the King's House was again alight, and up to its doors crept a line of vehicles, from gay dogcarts to Destries' few motor cars, bearing the sacredly O. K.'d names of Lady Haskins' visiting list.

From his gallery Dominick looked down upon the gardens, and through him tore the conviction that Josephine was there, moving serenely in that white man's paradise from which he was as much barred as the staring crowds of negroes about the gates.

Like a storm swept over him the desire to see her again, stronger than ever from its long repression. To see her—if only from a distance! He flung himself into evening regalia. The King's House had many gates, and to the least frequented of them he went, sauntering coolly past the sentry, bareheaded, hands in pockets, a cigarette between his lips, undistinguishable from a hidden guest strolling for coolness between dances. He was inside now. Melting into the shadows of the gardens, avoiding strolling couples, he waited, and at last she came, wrapped in cloudy topaz gleaming with crystals, a gold-colored scarf about her head, leaning on the arm of a pinkly pleasant young man

whom he recognized as the newly arrived aid-de-camp of the governor.

Dominick gazed, feeding eyes whose hunger he had not suspected until then, heedless until a sudden turn brought them face to face with him. There was no time for escape, and he awkwardly swung round half into a bush, feeling the man's eyes boring suspiciously into his back.

"By George, I believe that's the fellow!" the escort said as they passed on.

"What 'fellow' do you mean?" asked Josephine quietly.

"That Carib chap. Some of the men told me he'd been seen sneaking round out here. He'll have to be kicked out."

Josephine stopped, angry at Dominick's reckless bad taste, but oppressed by the picture of his possible ejection.

"Will you excuse me?" she said, withdrawing her hand from his arm. "I wish to go back and ask—my cousin—to leave."

Heedless of his stammering confusion, she left him, approaching Dominick.

"Mr. Tempest, why are you here?"

He looked miserably at her, noting a change, even an improvement, though he would have angrily said that such a thing was impossible. But the too great assurance of the modern young woman had left her, and in its place was a new dignity, an added sweetness.

"I couldn't help it. I had to see you again!"

"And of course you didn't stop to think of the position in which you were placing me by such an intrusion."

That was true, but then the other was so true also, and it showed in his eyes as he gazed at her.

"I couldn't help it."

She softened at that, but her purpose held firm.

"Why don't you go away, back to your own life in the States? Do you imagine it pleases me to have you staying here as—as you are?"

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"Josephine, if it was that girl that made you change, that was false."

She looked at him in his evening array, to all appearances as indubitably white as the man whom she had just left. It tore her afresh.

"I've ceased to care about that. I was angry and horribly hurt. But it's really the other. For my own sake, I ask you to go away."

"Do you imagine that I will give you up now?" he asked, seizing her hands. "Josephine, think of my life and my training! I am white!"

"Then prove it," she said steadily, her hands passive in his grasp. "Prove it by helping me—against myself."

"You love me," he accused.

"I shall probably always love you, but the possibilities back of you fill me with horror. I might forget it, at times, but they would be always there, as they must have been with your mother. Do you wish to condemn me to such a life as she must have lived?"

"But this would be so different," he pleaded. "Back in the States—"

"Your blood would be the same, poisoning the—the most sacred possibilities of life—"

"I see!" he breathed, dropping her hands. "Then go, Josephine—go now—while I can let you!"

She fled, back to the King's House with its lights and stately order that shut out the perfumed night and its dangerous sweetness, like a dark cup that exalted the senses while drugging the reason.

On the steps was Caine-Hammond, lounging amid a knot of the elder men. She summoned him with a gesture of her fan.

"Lend me your escort, please; first to some quiet place for a few moments, then back to my chaperon."

"He's here—out in the gardens," she went on, as they reached a deserted part of the broad gallery, and he needed no name to know of whom she spoke.

"The young fool! I'll attend to that!"

"Please—no unkindness I!"

Caine-Hammond's eyes darkened as he noted the agitation she tried to conceal. The affair had evidently gone more deeply with her than he had thought.

"He has no business here."

"Of course not. But then—it was for my sake that he came."

"I see." He gave a twisted smile. "I believe there is no sin a woman will not forgive provided it be committed for that reason."

"Provided it be committed in a certain way," she retorted, her eyes full on his with a hint of mockery. "Women adore—boldness."

"The cave man," he laughed. "Well, in this especial case—*his* case—he has certainly a right to it. Excuse me. Perhaps I say too much."

"Entirely so," she agreed sweetly. "As I once told you, feminine methods, especially of innuendo, are rarely successful with—feminine creatures."

"You think that I am incapable of other means?" he demanded.

For the instant, as he looked at her, he seemed to drop those mental indirections that always hung about him, standing out in uncompromising clearness. Josephine waited, a little breathless. Above all, she wanted, at that moment, to be safe; to be caught up, against her own will, and landed in some stronghold of custom and order, with a man at the door to keep at bay those dangerous influences of the tropic night without.

Then, like window shades, there came again across Caine-Hammond's eyes those veils of concealment.

"Once he is gone, things will be different with you, Miss Tempest. And I'll guarantee his going—in one way or another."

To Dominick, standing still where Josephine had left him, there came, a

little later, that same aid-de-camp who had been her escort, pink, pleasant, coolly courteous.

"Mr. Tempest? Good evening. His excellency tells me that you are leaving. If you have no objection, perhaps you will accept my company to your hotel?"

With a steering hand on Dominick's arm, he turned to the gates, chatting easily. Dominick saw how it was; the thing was being beautifully done, with that British hatred of anything like a "scene," but none the less, he was being quietly, politely put out.

Past the sentries they went, through the gaping crowd of negroes, the aid talking, smiling, so that none might suspect the facts of the case. In the pit of shadow below the fort, Dominick stopped, wrenching his arm from the other's grasp.

"I won't trouble you any more," he said bitterly. "You need fear no further intrusion."

They stood there, mere blots of white faces and shirt fronts in the darkness. The aid's hand sought the other's shoulder, his voice dropping its tone of admantine politeness.

"It's a rotten hole you're in, 'pon my word! Take my tip—cut it all out and go away."

But that was just what Dominick could not do. As Ma-am Margaret had said, the things of the island were potent to chain. Then again, there was the natural, human hatred of quitting under fire, the insistent urge to stay and fight.

He understood their reasons now; looking on those dreamy nights, on the terrific fecundity of the place, he knew why Caine-Hammond had said that they did not dare to let down the bars. The wild figs sprouting from the ramparts were symbolic of what would happen the moment that vigilance was relaxed—the very fortress of civilization rent by the returning wild.

There was still a place for him in that wild, up there by the Crater Lake. Unknown to himself, the way back to it was being smoothed for him. From Caine-Hammond's bungalow, a messenger had gone to Morne Garou, and two nights later, as Dominick cooled his anger on the walls of the fort, he was suddenly confronted by Lalla.

She was crouching in an angle of the broken steps, dusty, tear-stained. As Dominick bent over her with a cry of surprise, she looked up at him, huddled in her corner like a kitten at bay.

"You!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"Me run away, *miché*."

"Run away? But why?"

"Too much hell for Morne Garou, *miché*. Two day now, me foddha beat me."

"Oppellou beats you? But why?"

"Me think it for you, *miché*. Them girl, they laugh and say, 'Hoo, look them girl who face be frighten white mancac away!' And me foddha, he say, 'You no good. White mancac, he spit on you,' and he beat me. And me modda, she say, 'You go for Destri'. Go work. Go for them fort and wait who time white man come give you work.' Then me foddha, he beat again, so I run."

Dominick groaned inwardly. Everything he touched seemed fated to crumble under his hands. Lalla in Destries, seeking work! He knew the easy-going cynicism of that port of mixed bloods, and he had no doubt as to her fate. Remembering her, slim, supple, golden-brown, alive with youth up in that un-stained wilderness above the clouds, he shuddered at the thought of her going down into one of the lantern-hung cottages in the hidden alleys behind the water front.

"You must go back at once," he declared.

"No, me no sabe do so like. They go beat me again."

"Then I'll go with you."

Lalla rose, only half believing, but even that half belief transformed her.

"*Miché*, you go back with me?"

"I'll take you back, and I'll tell Oppellou a few things."

She only half heard, and she fell at his feet, her lips pressed to his shoes, her hands clasping his knees.

"Oh, *miché*, you go come back? You go be mancac for us? You be for our foddha and our modda—you be for all for us?"

Her touch and tone were healing for his raw pride, seared by the events of the last weeks. Below stretched the gardens, with the stately, flagpoled glimmer of the King's House. The sting of his ejection from it was still sore upon him. Damn these people, with their perpetual "Go away!" as if he were some fleabitten cur to be shooed off their grounds!

There was a place for him, a place where he was wanted, above the clouds in the eye of the sun. They could go, Lalla in the lead, slipping between the dew-wet creepers of the high woods, up through the cloud collar to that domain of stainless blue. A place where he was wanted—the thought of it was balm to his hurt.

He stooped and raised the girl.

"Let us go," he said.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two nights later, Dominick stood in the ring of palm trees on the summit of Morne Rose.

The night was a boundless purple about him, the stars hanging high. The moon had sunk beneath the cloud collar a thousand feet below, and its light beat mysteriously up as through a floor of gray onyx. Across the lake, the fires of the village marked the feast consequent upon his formal installation as chief, its revelry, he suspected, helped out by much palm toddy.

He was glad it was over, with its mixture of dignity and barbarism, a queer recrudescence of the past lifted high between clouds and sky, reddened by the fires of savage sacrifice. He had insisted upon being alone to-night, and he turned to the lava shaft above the grave of his mother.

A strange woman, that Josephine Tempest, and a strange heritage she had left him!

He had taken up that heritage at last. There was no longer any shred of white man's vesture upon his body; from the sandals on his feet to the band of uncut turquoise about his head, he had only the mancac's regalia for covering—a jaguar's pelt about his loins; below his knees, on his arms, and round his neck, circlets of tiny feathers plucked from the iridescent breasts of humming birds; girdling his waist, its ends falling almost to the ground, a heavy belt of plaited leather set with turquoise matrix.

As in a dream, he had moved amid old Oppellou's ceremonies—the column of fire upon the mancac's rock, the old man's quavering chants, the throb of the wooden drums. He could still see Lalla, preening herself importantly as the affianced wife of the chief; Gabriel, circling sullenly in the shadows; himself, white under his trappings, his arms upraised as he poured out the bowl of goat's blood. He saw again its viscid stream, reddened by the glow of the fire, smelled once more the stench of it hissing on the hot stones.

He looked down at himself, noting the contrast between his pale skin and his barbaric adornments. He had taken up his heritage, but there was more to returning to the wild than just baring one's body, so many things that could not be stripped off like a suit of clothes. Pressing his cheek against the monument, Dominick wondered whether his mother had found out the same thing, and what this heritage would mean to him. Would he relapse unthinkingly

under the spell of the elements? Or would he be strong enough to bring these people to some higher place?

Gradually, not by sight or sound, but from some faculty beyond the sense, came the conviction that he was not alone, the certainty of a silent, circling presence outside the ring of palms, peering in at him between the gray trunks. So strong was it that he sent a challenge into the night:

"Who is there?"

There was a moment of silence, fraught with a queer sense of calculation. Then came a bold step, a brown hand thrusting aside the screen of vines, and Gabriel stood there.

"Miché!"

At the word, the gesture of surrender that accompanied it, Dominick stirred, looking at this man of whose blood a half tide flowed in his own veins. It was only by the shine of the earth, coated with pale ash from the long-dead crater, that he was visible, as he stood there a superb, half-naked figure of bronze.

"You want to speak with me, Gabriel?" Dominick asked.

The Carib bent his head in humility as he crept imperceptibly nearer and nearer.

"Miché, you be mancac now, and me be come to say—to say—"

There was a lightning dart of his hand to his waist, a launching of his body like the strike of a coiled snake; and before Dominick could realize it, the other was upon him, one strangling arm about his neck, and in his side the hot bite of steel. With art instinctive wrench, he half turned and felt the blade catch upon a rib, glancing off in a tearing flesh wound.

Like that column of flame upon the rock, a flame of anger rose up in Dominick at the treachery of it. With one hand, he had hold of that murderous wrist, striving for a grasp on the smooth body, slippery with oil, writhing with

the lashing strength of a python. The Carib's teeth were in his shoulder, but there were things not taught on this mountaintop, and with a vicious kick, Dominick swept the other's legs from under him and, boldly releasing his hold on the knife hand, launched a crashing uppercut under the chin, following it with another between the eyes, and Gabriel went down under the impact.

Sick and faint with the pain in his side, Dominick leaned back against the monument, gazing down at the form at his feet. It was over for the moment, but he must seize the advantage now. If only he had a rope to tie the brute—A length of rubberlike creeper caught his feet, and he seized the knife and severed it, twisting it intricately about Gabriel's legs. Then he bent the arms behind the back and secured the wrists. The pungent scent of the crushed lilies rose in his nostrils, and he reeled back with a burst of high, sharp laughter.

When next he looked, after a period of dark inertia, Gabriel was conscious, writhing in sullen impotence, his breath coming in gasps from his chest pressed against the ground.

His ribs stiff with half-dried blood, Dominick dragged himself up. His body was cold, but he was still colder within, a white cold of outraged justice. He knew from old Oppellou the one thing that no Carib dared break.

"Will you take the bird oath upon my feet?"

"I go kill you yet!"

"Then I'll call the men and have you taken to Destries to the jail."

"They no go put me jail for them thing. Our law, he say if be two man-eat, they go fight."

"It's the white man's law here."

"It no be that thing!" Gabriel cried in triumph. "Miché Hammon", he tell me them king say for Carib keep Carib law!"

So Caine-Hammond was in this! Dominick would have to think of that,

but at present he had more pressing business.

"Then I can kill *you*," he said, but Gabriel snarled derisively up at him.

"You no sabe do them thing."

He was right; the white man's ethics were too strong in Dominick to permit of such a thing. But he had another plan, and he undid from his waist the leather belt.

"Get up on your knees!" he ordered, emphasizing the command with a sharp prick of the knife, helping Gabriel up by a hand in his hair. "Now bend over. I won't kill you, but I will whip you—for the good of society in general and of your own dirty little soul in particular."

The bronze back was smooth and taut before him, rising into a purple weal as he laid the matrix-studded belt across it with the full strength of his arm; a sickening business, but he set his teeth and flailed down the blows. A strange picture they must make, he thought. That they were the sons of the same father was stranger still. Strangest of all was it that it should happen at the tomb of Josephine Tempest. A sense of justice upheld him. It was not his own wrong that he was avenging, but rather the bitterness of that dead mother, satisfied in the pain of this youth—the son of her husband.

There grew in him a reluctant admiration for Gabriel's endurance. That superb back was a thing of shame now, but it had to be done. It was with a relief equal to his victim's that Dominick heard the gasp of surrender and stayed his hand. With a sobbing moan, Gabriel flung himself forward, kissing Dominick's feet.

"Me take them oath. You be—man-eat—for me."

It was over. In a black revulsion, Dominick severed the thongs and helped the other to rise. For a moment they swayed together, each catching for support at the arm that had dealt his

wounds. His tongue like a dead coal between ash-strewn lips, Dominick spoke:

"To water—the lake——"

Stumblingly they went down the steep trace, falling prone on the shore with mouths to the life-giving lake. They yielded their bodies to it, lying spent in the shallows, conscious only of its cool healing.

At last the dawn grayed overhead and the mountain greeted the day with a chorus of bird song. Dragging himself up on a rock, Dominick looked at himself, at Gabriel, two scarred affronts to the glory all about them; and yet, in the blood and passion of that night, in the surrender touch of Gabriel's lips upon his feet, something had gone out from both of them.

He had come back to his heritage, and with naked body and bare hands he had brought it down before him. "The wild"—people were apt to talk as if that were something superior! He thought of the village across the lake, its people sunk in drunken stupor; of old Oppellou, shrunken and twisted by the elements, yet the man could not be more than sixty.

"The lesser breeds without the law."

The line hummed in his brain; as never before, he realized the dignity of civilization, with its bulwarks of ethics. The tormenting longings of his boyhood were gone now; he had faced the wild, and now he could come or go, uncaught by its fascinations. He spoke:

"Gabou."

"Miché?"

"Give me your trousers and you take these things."

"But, *miché*—them be for mancac."

"I know it. Put them on."

With his own hands, he helped, twining the belt about Gabriel's waist, placing the band about his head. It was odd how much more fitting they looked against a dark skin.

"Now, then, who is chief?" he asked, as they finished the exchange.

"You, *miché*."

"Then go to the village and tell them that I have gone back to my own people, and that I say you shall be mancac in my place."

"Me?" breathed Gabriel. "They go say me lie."

"Show them your back," said Dominick grimly.

"And them girl—that Lalla?" asked Gabriel eagerly.

Lalla? Dominick had actually forgotten the little baggage. She was gone, like the rest of the fever of the last two days, leaving only the clean pain of his loss of Josephine.

"Take her, too. She'll love you now you are chief."

"Me be chief for them people, but you be all time chief for me!" cried Gabriel.

It was sixteen blazing miles to Destries, and Dominick must make them without horse, without shoes, almost without clothes. Creeping down, hugging the shadows, hiding from passers-by, it was past dark when he reached the outskirts of the town:

Abreast of Caine-Hammond's bungalow, glimmering through the dusk from behind its hedge of Euphorbias, an impulse took him in, brushing aside a negro servant who tried to bar his way. At the sound of the disturbance, Caine-Hammond came out, harsh at the sight of the disheveled intruder.

"Get out of here! What? You?" he exclaimed, as he recognized Dominick, and a suspicion of relief crept into his tone. "You have come back?"

"No thanks to you, I believe," returned Dominick somberly.

"How did you get into such a state? Your feet—— And good heavens, man, what is the matter with your side?"

"That's what I came here to find out." Dominick steadied himself against a

post, a startling apparition among the ordered comfort of the place. That commonplace comfortableness struck him as strange. Surely the house of a man who plotted against other men's lives should reflect some mystery.

"No, thank you," he continued. "I don't sit down in your house, Caine-Hammond, until we get this straightened out. I want to know how much you had to do with this: What did you tell Gabriel?"

"I told Gabriel the law of his own—and your own—tribe," replied the other steadily.

"Did you tell him that as part of the island government?" sneered Dominick.

Caine-Hammond was silent for a while, and when it came, his answer was different from any that Dominick had expected.

"Government—how much do you understand of it?" he asked, rather bitterly. "Do you know its burdens? Government—it consists mainly in protecting, from things in which they won't believe, people who grudge one the power to do it. I would have prevented your landing here at all if I could, but I lacked the authority to do so."

"So you thought you would have me murdered instead," accused Dominick.

"So I delivered you over to the law of your own people, provided you were fool enough to go back to them after my warnings."

"How much did you have to do with my going back?"

"Does a man have to follow every path that is opened to him?" demanded Caine-Hammond. "Is nothing to be left to strength and character? Are we to follow your American idea of wrapping people in cotton wool and keeping evils away from them rather than give them the opportunity of looking wrong in the face and walking through it untouched? When your mother went to your father, she dealt the whole social

system of the island a blow from which it took years to recover. Your coming here threatened just such another blow, and I was justified in taking any means to avert it. But now that you have come back from your people—"

"I haven't come back," Dominick interrupted. "I've come through."

Caine-Hammond looked keenly at him and saw, even through the grime of dust and sweat, that this was a different Dominick.

"What do you mean?"

"Go ask Gabriel."

"By George, there are times when I almost don't believe it about you!" exclaimed Caine-Hammond, in reluctant admiration. "Well, what are you going to do now?"

"I—I—" Dominick lurched forward threateningly, and then, suddenly dizzy, reached out as if intent only on keeping erect. His legs were crumpling under him like those of a paper doll.

"You'll go to bed; that's what you'll do," said Caine-Hammond authoritatively.

CHAPTER IX.

For a week, Dominick was content to lie detached from all but the four walls of his room, drowsily occupied with nothing but his physical mending. The queer part of it was the way the world kept pouring in through the avenues of his mind, its problems tagging along. He thought he had settled things up there on Morne Rose, but it seemed that he had merely stirred up more things to settle.

The pain of it sickened him, but the rebellion had gone out from him in that night of violence. He had imagined that, once he had given up hope, his love would die. He laughed at that now. Love had other food than just hope's will-o'-the-wisp.

He loved the pain, since it was for the sake of Josephine. Unconsciously he was near to relapsing into that dan-

gerous state of being in love with love, hugging the arrow sticking in his wound.

It was Caine-Hammond who roused him from that. As he came out upon the gallery where Dominick, now promoted to a long chair, spent his days, there was a moment of awkwardness at this, their first meeting since that evening of revelation on his return from the crater. There is something terribly intimate in having a fellow condemn one to death on his own decree. The queer part of it was that neither of them seemed any the worse for it, meeting now with all the outward courtesies and even with a certain respect for each other. Dominick's hard-and-fast ideas of the ways of the world were being turned about.

"What is there between you and Ma-am Margaret?" asked Caine-Hammond, cutting short his greeting with the alertness of a definite errand; an errand for which, Dominick thought, he had probably deliberately waited to tide over the awkwardness of that first meeting.

"Nothing that I know of, except that I met her sometimes at the old fort."

"You're a most extraordinary chap!" said the other, pacing the gallery. "And, if you'll excuse me, you're a most infernal nuisance, too. I never knew any one to get under the skin of the island in so short a time as you have."

"What's the row now?" asked Dominick wearily.

"I can't say. But Ma-am Margaret is dying, they think—it's a marvel she's lasted so long—and she absolutely refuses to go until she has seen you."

"Seen me!"

"Well, she demands Josephine Tempest's son. You're he, aren't you?"

"You know as much about that as I do. Shall I go to her?"

Caine-Hammond paced again in irritation.

"There's another situation. They sent for—Miss Tempest."

"I see. The trouble is that, if I go, I shall have to meet Miss Tempest, and you're afraid that I shan't behave myself," said Dominick, hauling himself up. "I happen to have some elementary notions of decency, though. If you'll call my nigger to give me his arm, you can go ahead and warn Miss Tempest that I'm coming."

Ma-am Margaret's cottage was silent as Caine-Hammond approached it; even the trilling of the canaries was stilled in the heat of the afternoon. Leaning awry on its ramshackle stilts, surrounded by negro cabins like birds' nests clinging to the slope, it was redeemed from squalor only by the flood of gold-and-scarlet Crotons all about it; with the innocent democracy of plants, they blazed as bravely on that mean slope as in the gardens of the King's House itself.

At the foot of the steps, Josephine waited.

"Is it over?" asked Caine-Hammond, struck by her absence from the sick room.

"No, but the doctor has quieted her for a while."

In place of the severity with which most women would have dressed for such an errand, she was gowned in tones of pink, fresh and dainty as if for an afternoon reception. Amid the glaring Crotons, the sunlight seemed to touch her with pale points of flame.

"Is Mr. Tempest coming?" she asked quietly.

"You mean—the Mancac Dominick Gabriel?" asked Caine-Hammond, with an uncontrollable lash of savageness, and she looked at him in question.

"I wonder why you call him that just now."

"That's what he is, is he not?"

"I heard that he had given that up."

"There are some things a man can't give up. His parentage, for instance."

She considered him silently; then nodded to herself.

"I see. This is a warning. But you really shouldn't have done that. You've only made me curious to see just why you considered another necessary."

Caine-Hammond flushed as she divined his intention, caused by the thought of Dominick, subtly changed as he was, paled, almost spiritualized by his illness. He looked at her, serenely indifferent to him against the glowing background.

"I—I hadn't meant to speak for six months yet—but—"

"I never like speeches that contain a 'but'; so don't speak now, whatever it may be," she interrupted. Then, with calm inconsistency, she added: "But why six months, Mr. Caine-Hammond?"

"I hoped that things might be different then."

"Again I see. You imagined that—love—was like the year, turning on itself."

There was contempt in the glance she turned on him, mingled with a certain exasperation as she took in the indefinable stamp of class, the air of unassailable position, upon his every feature.

"I'm going to tell you something that may be of use to you—some time," she said slowly. "I don't pretend not to know what you mean. I knew it on board ship; a woman always knows somehow. But never try to play safe with a woman, Mr. Caine-Hammond, and above all don't give her time to draw breath. The time to take a fortress is when it is most assailed, not when its defenses are in good order."

"Everything I've done was for your sake," he declared. "I was trying to save you from a fatal mistake."

"But a woman doesn't really want to be saved," she replied. "What we want is to do as we please—and be saved from the consequences."

"Does a woman really know what she wants?" he asked grimly.

"Then it should be easy to convince us that we want—something else. There was a moment—I shan't tell you which—when you could have convinced me. But you stopped your convincing and went on 'saving' me instead. You saved me too well. I'm in no danger now, and so—"

"May not that danger and that moment come again?" he asked eagerly.

"If the danger should come again, I shall be—very careful to see that you are not by to save me from it. I see Mr. Tempest coming now, and I wish to speak to him alone about poor Ma-am Margaret."

Caine-Hammond left her, easily erect as ever, but with an inner bitterness at the sight of Dominick, almost as white as his clothes, advancing slowly between the blazing shrubs; a mere six feet of outcast young muscle and bone, but somehow it had prevailed over his own position and cleverness.

Gravely Josephine and Dominick met; then, with a gesture whose anxiety she could not conceal, she waved him to the steps.

"Please sit down. You've been so ill."

"Hardly ill enough for that, Miss Tempest."

She shivered slightly at the formality of his address, going hastily on:

"I'll only keep you a moment. Poor Ma-am Margaret wishes so to see you."

"But why?"

"I can't quite say, but she asks for you all the time. She seems to think that you can forgive her for something—set her free from something."

"Free from what?"

"That again I don't know, unless it be the burden of continued life."

"How can I set her free from that?"

"That you must find out. But I wished to warn you that she mistakes me for—your mother."

He could understand that as he looked at her, swaying slightly, like the pliant stem of the wind-blown palm behind her, her hair, bright in a ray of sunlight, like the tip of some upward, wavering flame.

"You are so like her miniature," he said. "But—God forbid that you should share her fate!"

"Fate?" She echoed the word as a hushed cry. "After all, she was happy, was she not?"

"No," Dominick answered, holding himself steady by a violence of his will. "I've seen enough up there on Morne Garou to know the heartache, the humiliation—"

Her eyes were hard at that moment, and he saw that she was remembering her own humiliation of that afternoon at Tempest Vale.

"Josephine, now that it's all over, now that I have nothing more to hope for or to gain, I ask you to believe that that was not true."

"And why do you tell me that now?"

"Because I want you to know the truth."

"It would be kinder to leave me believing the lie."

"Would it?" he asked slowly. "Are you sure?"

"No—no!" she cried, breaking in disorder. "The truth makes it harder for me, for I hugged that lie. But then the lie made it worse. And I knew it was not true all the time. How could it be—a creature like that? But now I shall be forced to think of you always as—as I *must* think of you."

They gazed at each other, a little appalled at this collapse, in the magic of presence, of all their resolutions, leaving them tangled again in that rosy web of emotions of which every strand cut with a joy akin to red-hot knives.

"It's for your sake," he pleaded. "You must see that it's best for you."

"Best!" There was scorn in her voice. "Oh, how I hate the best!"

"Don't make it worse for me, Josephine!" he breathed.

She looked at him, whiter than the against the glaring foliage. The island had stripped him of his sheer youth, but its going had revealed something that had lain hidden under it, something far more desirable. An impulse of cruelty, a desire to make him suffer unbearably, came to her.

"But I will make it worse," she said through curving lips. "I will make it worse—and worse—and worse—until—"

"Josephine, there are limits," he warned unsteadily.

"Are there?" she asked indifferently. "They seem quite wide. I can't help admiring your—patience."

"What are you trying to do?" he asked.

She did not answer. From the cottage above them on its tottering stilts came a long, moaning cry of "Josephine!" By the steps, the other, living Josephine quivered as that appeal to a dead woman went on:

"Josephine, bring him back to me! You promised!"

"It's Ma-am Margaret," she said quietly, once more mistress of herself. "We must go to her."

CHAPTER X.

The room was a greenish gloom of slatted shutters closed against the heat, full of the twittering flights of the canaries flitting restlessly overhead. All about was the dusty bareness of a place the eyes of whose occupant were habitually fixed on something else. There was an impression of a queer mixture of the tropics and some art-quarter garret studio.

In the obscurity, the figure on the bed seemed to concentrate all the light in its half-luminous pallor. As he gazed at her face, her fleshless hands, Dominick understood the wonder at Ma-am Mar-

garet's continued existence. In her eyes, enormous, somber with longing, he read her impatience to be gone.

With a nod, Josephine dismissed the negress in attendance and motioned Dominick toward the prostrate woman.

"Be very gentle," she warned, and he tiptoed forward, with a young man's reluctant awkwardness in such a time. Like all youth, he hated such scenes with a purely physical dislike, all his nerves quivering with distaste as Ma-am Margaret spoke, her voice cavernous in her wasted throat:

"David! Is it you—at last?"

"No. I am Dominick—Josephine Tempest's son."

With a surprising flash of strength, the woman rose on her elbow, her gaze suddenly piercing as if she had withdrawn from it the curtains of her dreams.

"Josephine Tempest's son! Josephine—tell me—have you brought him back to me at last?"

Dominick quivered in response to the quiver he detected in Josephine at this confusion of her with that other so many years gone, but her answer came unhesitatingly, soft and full:

"Speaking as that Josephine whom you knew, I tell you that this is Josephine Tempest's son."

Ma-am Margaret relapsed again, clawing weakly at the wisps of hair straying about her face, looking at them in a struggle for understanding.

"It is so strange! You look so young, and he is so old! I thought he would come as a child—such a little, little child!"

"It is many more years than you realize," said Dominick.

"Yes—yes—and you must be he. You look so like David."

"David—who was he?" asked Dominick, struck by her continued harping on the name.

She had forgotten him for the moment, lying motionless, her eyes turning

across the room in a veritable hunger. Following her gaze, he saw, above a mass of artist's trappings, all molded and cracked by long years of the tropics, an unframed portrait on an easel—a man's portrait, the face of which struck him with a vague recollection as of a resemblance to some one whom he knew; a handsome face, but almost feminine in its sensitive refinement under a wavy mass of red hair; the face of an incurable idealist; the sort of face that a woman who loved it would gather to her breast in that strongest passion of all, the mingling of wife and mother. What he could not understand was the sense of recognition that came to him. It was a little like encountering a face in a crowd and being sure it must be that of a younger brother of some one whom he knew, but could not place.

Ma-am Margaret remained unconscious of them, all her glimmering regard absorbed by the portrait. From her lips came a faint stream of speech, and he strained his ears to catch the disjointed sentences:

"David—He could not bear ugliness! The perfect life—He longed so for beauty. That was why we came here. So ugly in Chicago! A perfect life of love and art under the sun and palms—So we came—"

The words trailed off into silence, though the lips still moved. Looking again at the portrait, Dominick thought he understood. An artist of course; by some trick of the brush, that painter of himself had expressed the mainspring of his life on the canvas—a longing for the beautiful, a cringing sensitiveness from sordid sights and sounds. "The perfect life," "the life beautiful"—Dominick could almost hear the catch phrases of that impotent cult. This man had been just the sort of chap to be caught in such an idealistic web; just the sort who would seek his paradise heedless, even unconscious, through what he dragged the attendant, faithful

woman. And the strange part was that such a man always had such a wife, one who, in some inexplicable way, only adored him the more for the hardships he made her share.

He could picture them, coming to Tabuga, and their disillusionment as, without money, without standing of any kind, they faced the cast-iron social strata of that essentially aristocratic island.

"I worked. I did what I could," Ma-am Margaret was muttering.

She had worked, a white woman working in a nigger country! Dominick had already seen enough to know what that meant. The murmur swelled again to audibility:

"He was so ill! And then my baby came. Two to be fed—and he had to have so many things. How was I to get them, with a baby to care for? Ah—that was my sin!"

"What was it you did?" asked Dominick, stirred as by the approach of something unseen.

"I sinned!" Ma-am Margaret moaned. "What else could I do when he lay there, needing all that I could not give? Then Josephine Tempest came, proud, willful, desperate, and she was the only one who had been kind to me. She came—and another woman with her—a Carib. Her child had been born dead up there on the mountain."

"Dead! Her child was *dead!*"

The cry was Dominick's, half choked by the breath in his throat. In a flash, he saw again the village by the Crater Lake, the arching palm trees, the gray huts, and old Meena, her head bent over her baskets, uttering her unrevealing sentence:

"Ma-am Zozéphine, she no have but one piccanie."

About his head the canaries shrilled in alarm. His knees bent under him and he sank down by the bed, grasping the frail arm, fearful lest the closed

eyes might mean that the slender thread of life had already parted.

"Ma-am Margaret—you must not go yet! You can't go—not until you're told me all!"

The eyes opened again, brilliant with dreams as they looked at him.

"David, is it you?" she murmured. "Have they let you come for me at last?" Her hands fluttered in a desperate effort at appeal. "I've waited so long. Oh, why do you look at me like that? Why don't you take me away?"

"You must tell first," said Dominick unrelentingly. "What was it that you did?"

"What I did—Oh—I sinned—sinned!"

Her cry filled the room, the birds echoing it in fright as she sat up, her gray hair streaming in disorder, her arms outstretched.

"Listen, David! I confess. You never knew it. You thought that the one that was buried was ours, but it was Josephine's. It was for your sake I did it—the strangest sin of all for a woman—for a mother. I loved you more than my own—our own—flesh and blood."

"What was it you did?" Dominick demanded, supporting her as her strength failed her, fearful lest the next collapse be the last. "Quick! What of Josephine Tempest?"

"Josephine!" Ma-am Margaret gazed at him with dimming eyes. "What else could I do? I was in such a bitter, bitter need to keep him! And so was she. Each of us—in bitter need to keep the man we loved. Her baby was born dead—and there was another woman—a Carib woman—who, in a few weeks, might be the mother of the chief's eldest son."

Dimly Dominick saw it, piecing it out with his own knowledge of that other life up on Morne Garou—Josephine Tempest, desperate, striving to keep

her hold on the man for whose sake she had thrown everything away, striving to keep her place as the manac's first wife, a place tenable only by the mother of his heir.

His heart was hot within him at the thought of her in such a pass. His mother! But then—Josephine Tempest's child had died! There came a whispering cry from Ma-am Margaret:

"Oh, if you are really he—the one for whom I wait—set me free!"

Her hands plucked at his shoulders, and he shivered at their touch, sinking coldly through his thin coat into his flesh.

"Not until you confess it all," he repeated, and chokingly the answer came back:

"I sold my baby to Josephine Tempest that I might save the man I loved!"

The import of her words set his head to whirling, but through it he managed to hold steady.

"Then if I am the one whom you sold, who was my father?"

"David—there—on the easel."

So that was the resemblance that he had caught, a faint echo of his own face as in a faded, softened mirror! For the woman in his arms he could feel no emotion; by her own act she had cast him out, and the mother he would always keep was the woman of the miniature, the woman of the grave on Morne Rose, the woman whose bitterness he had avenged on that bloody night beneath the stars.

There was a long sigh, a sudden burst of light upon Ma-am Margaret's face, followed by a strange sound of laughter.

"David, I am coming! And I can laugh for you again! You always loved that so—to hear my laugh. I always did it, no matter how things were. I did it for you, and you thought I didn't care. I'm coming—laughing—"

If rang through the room, broken, huskily sweet, like the sound of an in-

strument long laid away. Dominick rose, shrinking from this strange passing. It might have been the trick of a chance ray of sunlight, but it seemed as if a shadow lay across the bed, a luminous shadow of golden amber, and in it, to the sound of her own laughter, Ma-am Margaret crossed the invisible barriers against which she had so long beaten in vain.

There was a sob from Josephine; the negress hustled in again, full of her race's strange delight in death; the canaries trilled and nestled about the stilled form.

But Dominick was gazing at the portrait, forgetful of all else; the face of his father, a dreamy, useless face, but still—

"Josephine!" he cried, stretching out his hands to her. "Josephine, do you see what it means? I am *white*!"

"That makes no difference," she answered, looking at him in a way he could not understand.

"You mean—" he gasped doubtfully, but she motioned him to the door.

"This is no place— We must go."

The sun was already low, sending level shafts of light among the scarlet and gold of the flaring Crotons. Overhead, the palms clattered their fronds in the salt breeze, filled with the tang of the Caribbean. After the morbidity of that chamber of death, it seemed a world of life itself.

"Josephine, what do you mean?" he cried again.

"That it makes no difference," she repeated strangely.

She stood there, tall and straight, a pink-clad flame of humanity against the blue of the sky. As he gazed, Dominick's heart sank, and a thousand unbidden pictures swarmed in his brain.

Were the prejudices of the island so strong that even now he was still outcast? Would even the revelation of his parentage be insufficient to wipe out those childish years on Morne Garou?

It had all been so useless, in a way, these weeks of storm and stress. And yet it had had to come, he saw; the thing had been there within him and it had needed poulticing out for its healing. But—had it been healed?

"Josephine!" The pain of his voice surprised even himself as it rang in his ears. "Don't you understand? I am white."

For a moment she stood there, regarding him with that look which he could not understand. It came to him that perhaps he would never understand her—that that was her charm.

"It isn't I who don't see," she said scornfully. Then she broke, crumpling toward him like a flower whose supporting stem has been invisibly severed. "Oh, how blind you are! How could

I have ever been what I have been to you unless, through it all, you had not always been—youself?"

"You mean that you loved me through it all?" he whispered, a little later. "You mean that you still loved me, in spite of—"

"What else was I doing here half an hour ago?" she asked softly.

"I thought you were just—torturing me."

"And so I was," she laughed, nestling her head again upon his shoulder. "But why should I do that except to make the pain—unbearable?"

"Unbearable?"

"Yes—so that—against my own will—you would—"

A great light dawned upon Dominic.

"Ah—I see!" he cried.



A QUESTION

APRIL, my April, and how am I to know you?
 By violets and crocuses and nodding daffodils?
 Or by the golden butterflies
 That toss against the April skies
 And fleck the yellow fields that rise
 Along the lifting hills?

April, my April, and how am I to know you?
 By eager music in the dawn and orchard-scented breeze?
 Or by the mating birds that sing
 Their ecstasies of love and spring,
 Triumphant, as they weave and wing
 Among the leafy trees?

April, my April, and how am I to know you?
 By fairies dancing on the grass as gay as April rain?
 By truant dreams? Or shall I know
 By girlish eyes and lips aglow
 And little winds that whisper low:
 "Your youth has come again!"

PERRIN HOLMES LOWREY.



To Be a Woman

By Marie Conway Oemler

Author of "Lost Ladies," "The One-Eighth," etc.



OVER the high altar, hung with priceless lace and set with centuried-silver candlesticks and fragile flower vases, the youthful fairness of a dying Christ gleamed upon His ebony cross. Beneath Him, a sheaf of lilies lifted their blanched chalices, from which arose a delicate and pervasive odor, an elusive ghost of fragrance. From carved and dim niches leaned crowned and meditative saints; and against the stained-glass windows flamed the outside sun, flinging into many-colored life wide-winged, militant Michael, calm-eyed Raphael, meek, faintly smiling Mary, Anthony holding in a half-swooning embrace the soft, sweet body of a child.

Timidly, almost apologetically, from her place among the lay sisters, Angélique lifted her blue eyes of a Breton to all these still and passionless faces. The youngest novice wondered, a bit apprehensively, what momentous miracle *le bon Dieu* was going to permit them to perform. For surely there would be—there must be—something done. All these mighty saints, these august archangels, did they know—was it beneath their high and heaven-poised thoughts to realize—that they, also they, were in a sense to be—*banished*?

Ordered to leave the convent—to disperse!

Angélique looked up at them with her trustful and expectant eyes. Upon her knees, she waited.

And still the sun shone splendidly. On the red roofs, the pigeons cooed and preened. In the green, quiet garden the brown bees droned, the blossomlike butterflies fluttered, and through an open window came a warm and sweet air.

And to-night the dews would weep, the stars come out and shake their flaming fleeces in the deep blue pastures of heaven, and upon the impenitent earth, the unmoved earth, would glimmer the white magic of the moon. And then the dawn would come, with pink blushes; and another day would glow golden and run its numbered hours. Day upon day, night following night.

She had that sense of staggering shock that the warm, crying finite experiences when its untried and undisciplined faith feels, as it were, the impact of the cold, quiet, inevitable infinite. As if, outside, there was—Nothing—Silence—The Dark.

With eyes like banked fires, Angélique went back to the kitchen and mechanically finished scouring her copper pots, for habit survives, though faith fails. Her mind, like a thing bludgeoned, lay prostrate before one

mental picture—the picture of a Breton hut, wind-swept and desolate; above it, the pathless spaces of an empty sky; behind it, failing fields; and, bounding the farthest horizon, those other sterile fields, the flockless and flowerless fields of the sea. Then, like the overwhelming onrush of waters upon a harried shore, over her consciousness roared the thought;

"I must go back—home!"

She received upon her forehead the farewell kiss of the fine old abbess, who said, when the novice wept:

"Sans bruit, my little one, sans bruit!"

Then, out of a crying turmoil of disruption, of ordered worlds riven asunder, she emerged, a very young girl, beautiful, ignorant, fiercely chaste, glacially virginal, her worldly possessions the clothes upon her, the small bundle she carried, the few francs in her pocket.

When she stood once more in the home doorway, Georges, her brother, took her hand and kissed her with a sailor's bluff tenderness. The big, fair seaman saw no tragedy in her home-coming. He had the Breton's simple faith, but he had not wanted his little sister to become a *religieuse*. Now he told her bluntly that evidently *le bon Dieu* was of the same mind, and *le bon Dieu* was one who knew best His own business; therefore, everything was all right.

"Come, come, look up, like a good lass, and let us see thy white teeth in a smile!"

And he smacked her heartily, by way of encouragement.

But her old grandfather lifted his white head and fixed upon her a long look of commiseration and of respect, a look full of the sad wisdom of the old and poor. He said in his trembling voice:

"Seek not to force thy heart into resignation. Resignation is only a fine

name for despair. When one is resigned, one is ground between the hard, relentless millstones of doom. Rather, train thyself into acceptance. To accept is to look up, to hope, to work."

But as they clung together, she felt upon her cheek his slow tear.

Too poor and unlettered ever to have aspired to the higher religious life, hers at best would have been only the humble fate of the lay sister, the patient worker and bearer of burdens, the fate of Martha. But she had wished to bear through the wilderness of the world, secure beneath the woven tissue of prayers and sacrifices, that crystal casket whose secret and sacred jewel is virginity, and the dignity of her desire and of her grief ennobled her. Possessed always of a curiously genuine beauty and a sweet and austere reserve, her face took on the haunting and unforgettable imprint of her soul.

Silent and uncomplaining, she took up her heavy and homely tasks. She was used to toil; labor had for her no terrors. But in the late winter, Georges, upon whose sturdy shoulders had rested the main burden of the small home, died after a brief illness. Save for the old grandfather whose care now devolved upon herself, Angélique was quite alone.

Her few neighbors were almost as poor as she. The land itself seemed dying. Beyond their fields lay desolate dunes, wide wastes, lonely indentations upon which the waters thundered, pebbly bays given over to solitude and sea birds. And like migratory birds themselves, the people had begun to fly seaward.

The very seasons were unpropitious. The scanty crops had failed, crops toiled for with infinite labor and incredible patience. And now in the young girl's eyes flickered the gleam of despair. Always the old man watched her wistfully, with that passion of tenderness and of understanding which is

the Breton's tragic gift. One day he spoke:

"Angélique, Berthe's Mathieu is a good lad, a kind, kind lad. Truly has he been to us a neighbor, a friend!"

"Oh, but of an excellence, grandfather! No one could be kinder than Mathieu!"

"It is known to thee, of course, that in the spring he emigrates?"

"But Berthe goes with him. Therefore, he will not suffer too cruelly from lonesomeness. In that new country, he will have help, a home."

"Berthe," said the old man slowly, "is old. One's mother is much, very much—but not enough to fill the heart of a young man in the fresh flower of his days. No, Mathieu must take with him a wife, a girl of his own people, for we take not too kindly to strangers, we Bretons. Eh, yes, he must have a Breton maid, our fine Mathieu!"

"Yes, I suppose that would be best," said Angélique, with indifference. What had she to do with marriage or giving in marriage? "Let us hope he will find just the right girl for him, for there are many who would be willing to take Mathieu." Her stern sense of truth made her add: "He should, indeed, have the best of the best. Save thyself and our old saint of a curé, I had not known there could be in the world a man so good as Mathieu."

"He thinks," said the old man delicately, "that he has already found her, his one right girl—the best of the best. One always thinks thus," he ended, with a smile, "when one is young—and loves."

And at that he lifted his mild gaze to his granddaughter's passionless face. Her heart skipped a beat. But, the good God, why should he regard her with that imploring eagerness, speak to her in that supplicating voice?

"We are of a terrible, an incurable poverty, even here where all are poor," said the old man, after a pause of pain-

ful thought. "Regard, my child, the land itself. It, too, fails—like me, like me who am old. And there are many and great changes, and under the feet of them are trampled us who cling to old faiths, to old loves, to old customs, without which, stripped and bewildered, we wither. There is here no more room for us. We must go. Ah, my child, already thou and I had known hunger and cold, save for the outstretched hand of this kind neighbor, this good Mathieu. Thou didst think that what saved us was a little hoard I had put by? Not so, not so! Help came from Mathieu, secretly sharing with me his little. He could not bear to see thee suffer! Angélique, surely thy woman's eyes will have told thee? Surely thou art not blind?"

"No. I see, I see!" Her voice was as the voice of the dying.

"Georges is gone," said the grandfather. "Me, my days are but a few. Already the wind of my passing shakes the tree of my life. When I go away upon that wind, what, then, of thee, thou desolate one? Seek service in the cities, among cold strangers? But, the cities are crowded and without pity, and in them we Bretons suffer misery—we suffocate, we die grieving for our wide spaces, our wild winds, our free sea. They devour us, those ferocious and insatiable cities. No, no, never that for thee!"

"Angélique, I have prayed, I have besought guidance. As one true man to another have I spoken to our good God, and I think He has answered those prayers of mine when, in our extremity, He sends thee the strong, bright love of a good man's youth. For Mathieu wishes to take thee—and me, also me—with him when he goes. He will not take the flower and leave the withered branch.

"My little one, my dove, last light of my old eyes—see, there is nothing here for thee, nothing at all! So I have

said to Mathieu, our neighbor: '*Angélique will go.*'"

As if to still the wild clamor of her heart, she pressed her hands against her breast. She did not speak, but stood, young and pale, regarding him with piteous eyes, and in them that which brought a cruel red into his shriveled face and made his lean old throat work convulsively. He bowed his white head upon the stick clasped between his hands. And presently, with passion, with humility, but also with finality:

"Is not Life, also, one of His angels? Receive, then, as from God, what Life gives to thee."

The words found as yet no echo in her heart. She turned and fled. All night she lay prone before the altar of one of those small and hutlike churches built by the people for their Breton saints; lonely little chapels, half forgotten, by the roadside, in the fields, in the forest, wherein one may agonize alone, as in Gethsemane.

She knew that a restless and relentless power had seized upon her—the power of the fate of women. Voices from immeasurable distances, from incalculable deeps, called to her—voices of women, praying, weeping, groaning in travail; women through whose hands slipped, like beads of a dolorous rosary, all the woes of all the worlds. They were whispering to her, calling, "*Sister, sister!*" And she answered, with shaking lips:

"I hear you. Alas, my God, it is a bitter, terrible thing to be a woman!"

Dawn was touching the treetops with a clear and rosy light when she walked home in the fresh, wet hush of the morning. She stood for a few moments by the old man's bedside, looking down upon his white head on his hard pillow; and when he opened his eyes and looked up at her, she took in her firm, comforting clasp his shaking hands.

"Your word to Mathieu," she said

composedly, "was the right word. I will hold by it. We will go with him, you and I."

She was married in a poor enough frock, but under her cap her hair was very black, her eyes very blue, her face very fair. As in a dream, she repeated after the curé the words that bound her irrevocably to the man standing beside her. Her unresponsive hand was held in a grasp warm and virile; and then, upon her lips of a child, ignorant of life and of love, fell her lover's kiss. She said to herself stonily:

"Is this what God desires to give me, in return for what *I* wished to give *Him*?"

But Mathieu, regarding her with happy eyes, saw only her beauty of a young girl, felt only that she, whom he adored, was his. The tall, fair-haired young fellow, who had been to her merely a neighbor—at best a kindly friend for whose welfare one dutifully prayed—loved her after the unabashed and ardent manner of a plain man who lacked the subtleties of an initiated mind. He did not know that she, whose heart was as a fountain sealed, recoiled from this natural and beautiful affection. Her very austerity, which had in it something high and sweet, made her doubly dear to him. His love for her was tinged with a touch of reverence.

When they reached the new country which was henceforth to be home to them, at first its enormousness, its vast expanses, its clear and vital solitude—a solitude never inert, but rather like some immanent power—its great hills jutting into pale skies, its whole titanic effect, astonished and appalled her. The distances dazzled; the high hills hurt; the small, rough ranch house seemed a tiny point in the center of illimitable loneliness. She hungered for the hoarse voice of waters, for spume and spray, for seaweed upon white beaches, for the salt breath of sea

winds. Perhaps this was that world, that strange other world, of which it had been written: "*And there shall be no more sea.*" That hurt worst of all, for there is a wave of the sea in every Celtic heart.

Just beyond the nearest hills, shut in a sweet and serene valley, lay one of those missions where the white man strives to instill into the red man an ideal simple and religious—work and prayer. Between a cleft of the hills, outlined against the pink and silver of morning and the purple pall of twilight as if limned upon the sky's self, uprose a cross. And stealing out across the distance and the dimness came the far, faint call of bells—thrice a day, the *Angélus*; with the deepening dark, the slower, sadder tolling of the *De Profundis*.

To the Breton woman in exile, these airy voices, these touching and familiar voices of prayer, seemed the last link between herself and far-off France—perhaps between herself and God. Pausing in her work, she would lift her face, while from her rebellious heart uprose a desolate outcry and with clenched hands she beat upon her breast.

But presently, almost insensibly, the land ceased to be hostile and strange. As if it had weighed and measured them in some secret balance and found them not wanting, it began to wear the friendly and familiar aspect of home. Mathieu, from the very first, had loved it. He was content, toiling titanlike from daylight to dark, and then, tired, happy, with smiling eyes, singing in his deep voice some snatch of an old folksong, hurrying home to the ruddy glow of his fireside—and to her.

"Never was there given to any other man a wife so dear and perfect and beloved as thou!" he told her.

With his great arms of a pioneer who plows and sows and reaps, he had drawn her close, so that her black hair

brushed his cheek, and her heart beat against his side. His lips left her passive mouth and touched the delicious curve of her throat in a lingering and loverly caress. His eyes adored her. At such moments, the woman felt life upon her as a garment of flame.

She turned her head, to meet the placid, satisfied eyes of her grandfather, the pleased and proud smile of Berthe. If she glanced upward, it would only be into Mathieu's impassioned eyes. And outside was the night, nothing but the big, empty night, brooding over the big, indifferent world.

Summer came and went, and autumn melted into the mellow loveliness of Indian summer. But to the sick eyes of Angélique, all beauty was blotted out. That had come upon her of which, save in frightened dreams, she had not dared to think. She was aghast. It seemed to her that this small, new life approaching her was the last drop in her cup of bitterness, the seal set upon the inevitable. It was a terrible thing to be a woman.

Her eyes had grown large and shadowed in her pale face. Her resilient and boyish tread was gone. She moved languidly, step dragging, head bent. Mathieu watched her with troubled eyes.

"Beloved, if thou wilt not rouse thee from this dismal state, thou wilt work evil upon thyself," he remonstrated. "And evil to thee, Angélique, is as the end of the world to me," said Mathieu.

She shrugged and thrust out her lip.

"One brings upon oneself *nothing*," she said, with somber passion. "To imagine otherwise is a great foolishness. See you, one is born, grows, hopes, prays, suffers—and is caught up—*thus!*" And she cast away from her, with a gesture of ineffable contempt, an imaginary trifle, a pinch of viewless dust.

"Be not troubled overmuch concerning these vagaries," the grandfather

counseled the husband. "I have lived long enough to learn that when women wish to be unhappy, it is the height of folly to offer them consolation."

"But, why, my God, should she wish to be unhappy?" the young man wondered grievously. "Do I not adore her?" And he added, with a deep sigh, "Ah, it is true that I understand them not, women. They appear to be, at times, of an incomprehensible perverseness, a marvelous foolishness. It is not impossible that God understands them."

"It is because God understands, and is merciful, that this foolishness is permitted," said the old man, smiling slightly. "Rail not against a dispensation of Providence, my son. Rather let us who are men be grateful for the unwisdom of women!"

But Angélique perceived that they were consumed with anxiety concerning her, and she experienced a gloomy pleasure.

"Perhaps I shall die," she thought.

Yet the calm induced by preparing herself for a possible passage to another world pushed her into the current of normal life, which caught her up and swept her unaware into the safe shallows of a healthy reaction. Shorn of sick and morbid imaginings, and thus allowed to present themselves in their shy tenderness, their appealing graces, thoughts of the child crowded upon her with soft insistence. The divine note of motherhood, far and sweet as the mission bells at twilight, began in the depths of her heart to sound an angelical salutation.

With her needle poised, she would fall into daydreams. With infinite care she stitched diminutive garments, and at the same time sewed herself firmly to the skirts of life.

A chill grew upon the countryside. The stars came earlier; the twilight purple deepened into black. One evening, weary with a deadly tiredness, she sat by her shutterless window and

listened for the bells. And when they came, she stood unsteadily upon her feet, for one says the Angelus standing. With folded hands, she murmured:

"The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary—"

Her voice trailed then into the salutation of the Messenger, that interlude of purest poetry rapt into prayer. And now it was the Woman, answering:

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word."

And suddenly, as most beautiful things happen, as a folded flower bursts at once into bloom, the real meaning of the familiar words she was repeating pierced the Breton's heart, and she saw, in all its glory and its terror, woman accepting, with a conscious and high unselfishness, the fate not of her own choosing, the pain not of her own making.

"Hail, thou that art highly favored, blessed art thou!"

And then the bright Messenger had gone; the angel departed from her. The visions vanished, the realities began.

Reality was upon Angélique even then. Her arms dropped to her sides and her face contracted. A pang, the like of which she had never known, rent her, head to foot. Soul and body seemed torn asunder. She swooned.

Then voices came—not angelical voices, but homely voices of earth, kind and concerned. Dimly she heard them, and the sound of hurrying feet. Then hands were upon her, warm hands, kind hands, that sought to pluck her back from the gulfs into which she felt herself falling. Out of great depths, she was swung up to greater heights, to beat with clenched fists upon shut and brazen doors; and they behind the doors would not look, would not listen, would not answer—perhaps because the mission bells were so loud and her own voice such a dying trickle of sound.

After a while, she was free of tor-

ment, quite blessedly and perfectly free, but unbelievably tired, unutterably spent. Persistently, with a thin, high-keyed, shrill insistence, a sound stabbed her drowsy consciousness.

She opened her eyes and turned her languid head upon her pillow. Beside her bed stood Berthe, holding in her thin arms a small bundle, which emitted mewing and catlike cries.

"Angélique, regard thy son, thy magnificent, thy adorable son!" she crowed. And she addressed the wailing atom: "Regard thy mother, my angel!"

With pride unspeakable, she placed beside Angélique a red and wrinkled speck of humanity, a creature incredibly small and absurdly bald and toothless, with slitted eyes and a rudimentary nose, writhing its prehensile feet, making with its futile and needlelike fingers aimless and uncouth motions, and filling the room—or was it not the joyous and responsive universe?—with a voice thin and shrill as a mosquito's.

The blue eyes of Angélique fell upon this uncomely morsel, and instantly a light flowed into them and was kindled into a quenchless flame. She drew the hairless head to her bosom, and as the thirsty mouth closed blindly upon it, her pale lips sweetened into a smile of content.

"But he is strong! And, my God, how perfectly beautiful he is!" sighed his mother.

"Just like his father! Just like Mathieu, my son!" exulted his grandmother. "Hoo! He has the leg, the thigh, the fist, of the three-months-old, and he just born! Also, lungs like our leather bellows, praises to God!" and Berthe began to weep with sheer pride.

Trying with clumsy tiptoeing to make his entrance noiseless, big Mathieu stole into the room. His face was full of a solemn rapture, and tears of relief and of delight filled his eyes. Behind him appeared the grandfather's sweet old face.

"Come nearer, my husband, and look upon thy son. Observe his mouth of a new rose, his nose of a little seraph! Grandfather, do but feel the great fist of him! Open thy beautiful eyes for thy father, my little Jesus!" Her own eyes filled with exquisite tears. She said, in a low voice: "God repays us. It is a wonderful thing, a heavenly thing, to be a woman!"

The child grew and thrrove, and the ranch kept pace with him. For the man and woman were so brave and strong and thrifty, so patient and hard working, so full of sterling probity, that peace and plenty had to follow them. As by a natural law, the land responds to such. To them the great Northwest opened wide her glorious arms; she followed the man's plow with her green and gracious feet, laid her hand upon his fields and left them golden with ripening grain. And while she filled their barns with her plenty and their lungs with her pure and vital air, she breathed into the very souls of them her high ideals, her wise and sober freedom.

For the old grandfather, in the fullness of his days, there was made a bed with cool clay sheets and a coverlet of sweet green grass embroidered with wild flowers in summer and piled with drifted snows in the long days of winter.

To the ranch house came such children as only clean love and healthy labor can breed—children ruddy and clear-eyed and fleet-footed and broad-backed, sturdy youngsters trained to habits of obedience and industry and an unaffected piety. Hard upon the heels of that lusty first-comer they followed, until five tall lads and two demure, rosy little maids filled the house to overflowing. Mathieu said his house had elastic walls; it stretched out to make room for every child. His boys were the sons of his pride, but his girls were the daughters of his fondest love,

and the big father gravely and profoundly worshiped them. Were they not Angélique's dear self come back in the lovely fairness of her first youth?

When Berthe presently feel asleep, she closed her eyes in a home of such plenty as she in her younger days would not have dared even to dream of. Berthe went out unafraid, convinced that heaven was somewhat like that ranch house, the strongest and best saints somewhat like Mathieu, the tenderest ones like Angélique, and the littler and dearer angels and innocents somewhat like their children.

For Angélique had changed; she had ripened, grown golden like the grain, in that atmosphere vitalized by ordered duties and wholesome happiness. She must brew and bake, scrub and sew, pausing to rock the cradle and croon a lullaby, to steady small, staggering feet, to hold small, moist fingers, wipe ridiculous noses, hear half-intelligible prayers, scold, chide, counsel, laugh, cry, sing, put her woman's shoulder to the great, never-resting wheel of the world's ordered work, tasting thereby the plain, unhurried joys, the inescapable, blessed sorrows, of the common lot. And grown thus, big, benignant, vital, serene, holding in the plain woman's hands of her those thousand common things of daily living that are the secret keys of the kingdom, she knew now how blessed a thing, how tender a thing, it is to be a woman.

Never had the ranch known a better year. Never had peace so visibly hallowed and love so blessed and plenty so filled it as on that day when, across the width of the world, in a town of whose very existence they were ignorant, there rang out an assassin's shot, and a royal man and his wife died. The man and his wife in the Montana home, with their children around them, did not hear it. Nothing disturbed their repose that ominous night. They

were so busy, there was so much work to be done—what time had such simple folk, such laboring folk, for shots and cries and curses and crowned heads dying?

Some days later, the younger Mathieu, tall young Mathieu, the eldest born, brought home the week's supply of newspapers from the mission post office. Young Mathieu was excited, and his eyes were shining. For there was war in the world again. But the older, slower Mathieu shook his head. War? There was no time for war any more. People were too busy. This affair was a bad thing, a wicked thing, but they over yonder would patch it up somehow. They over yonder always patched up such things. In the meantime, let us plain folk say a prayer for that poor archduke and his wife—when all was said and done, they were a man and a woman—and then let us go on with our work.

But this time Mathieu the older was wrong and Mathieu the younger right. They over yonder couldn't or didn't patch it up. It was beyond them, perhaps; it may be that it was inevitable, that it had to be. And so the terrible thing that had been shaping itself in the dark came forth, full grown and devil strong, and hurled itself upon a world that stood aghast and unprepared.

Out there in Montana the Breton man and woman, pale and tense, looked out across their peaceful purple mountains, their green-and-gold fields, their bursting barns, all the sweet, orderly thrift that made home and happiness, and with horrible soul vividness saw the smoke and heard the roar of guns and the terrible tramp of countless feet invading France.

France invaded! France attacked! But, good God, this was like standing by to witness the murdering of one's mother! Husband and wife looked at each other with burning eyes. Beside

them young Mathieu stood with clenched hands and a pale face.

"I am an American, me. I was born here. *This* is my country. But France is the land of my father and my mother. Oh, to be a man grown! If they would take me as I am! I can shoot straight!"

And he ran away, that they might not see his tears and think him childish.

The father looked after him and smiled with a stern and quiet satisfaction. There was a thought in the father's mind which he did not as yet voice to the mother. He merely said: "We have a man child."

A few days later—Belgium was then in her death struggle and the invading hosts were in France—he laid his hand upon his wife's shoulder.

"Angélique, hush thy heart a moment. Listen, and tell me what is it comes across the world upon the wind?"

Her head went up.

"The call of France, my husband," said she. "Do you think a Breton woman would hear that less clearly than a Breton man?" And she leaned forward and kissed him where he stood. But for all that her face was calm and her voice steady, she went pale. And suddenly came a cry: "Mathieu! Mathieu!"

For a long moment they clung to each other. Both knew.

Six weeks later, Mathieu had gone. He was still quite a young man, for, like his people in general, he had married in his first youth. With characteristic thrift, he had left his house in perfect order, everything in the wife's hand, and young Mathieu growing up to take his father's place. Also, there were four other sturdy fellows growing up, like young oaks, to fill possible vacancies. There was no want to fear for those left behind.

In an alcove just off the little girls' bedroom stood a small scoured table, covered with a snow-white cloth. Upon it was a blue-and-white Virgin, and

two wax candles in sticks polished to the brightness of gold; always, too, a bit of greenery—flowers in their season, and a sprig of cedar in the time of snows. Lately there had been added a gallant, mailed little Jeanne d'Arc. Between Jeanne Soldier and Mary Mother they placed the letters from the front.

Mathieu wrote as a plain man writes to the woman of his heart and his children, whom he may never see again—wonderful things, terrible things, glorious things; all put down with a limpid truthfulness, an epic simplicity, as of those who wrote the gospels. He was glad to live in such days, to face such odds, fight such a fight, and he had no faintest doubt or fear as to the end. Because, stripped bare of tinsels and trappings that had disguised and disfigured her, washed clean and made pure by fire and sweat and blood and tears, the sunbright, naked, undying soul of France walked abroad in the light of day: "*Behold me, my children! Look upon me, who am France!*" And he, Mathieu, simple Breton, plain man of the people, saw this his immortal mother with his mortal eyes! To see the shining soul of unconquerable France! Was not such a thing as *this* worth striving for, toiling for, fighting for—dying for?

Angélique hung the tricolor above the altar, beside the newer, starrier flag; they two sheltered Jeanne and Mary. Nightly the children knelt before the home shrine, lifting their rosy faces. And when they had finished praying for their father, his namesake stood erect and cried in his young voice, that had such an American edge to it:

"*Vive la France!*"

"And our America," said the littlest girl.

"And our America," said all the children and their mother.

In the spring of the next year, Mathieu wrote:

"Angélique, I have thrice had such a sweet, such a consoling dream! I dream I have come back home to the ranch. I am walking up the little lane that leads to our gate, the gate where we stand at evening to wait for the children to come home from the mission school, and for the messenger that brings our mail. Well, there I am, and glad to be there and out of the trenches. I keep saying to myself, 'Home, home, home!' with such a light and happy heart! It is that hour when the sunset is fading, when our mountains are purple and the light dies away slowly behind them in a sort of dimmed gold and the mission cross is the last thing to go.

"I see that, and then I see you, most dear and beautiful, standing bareheaded by the gate. I look and look and look at you, as if I cannot satisfy my hunger to see you. I cannot tell you how greatly I love you! And then I see one of the mission Indians, on a brown-and-white Indian pony, come down the road. He is a long way off, and it takes him some time to reach the gate, so that it is quite dusky when he approaches you.

"You turn over and over in your hand the letter he gives to you; you seem to hesitate before you open it; and then, as you stand there reading it in that dying light, the Angelus begins to ring. You do not stand to say it. I see you fall upon your knees, and your adored head is bowed to the dust. You weep. My heart, my heart, how bitterly you weep!

"I am greatly troubled, and suffer cruelly, experiencing acute anguish to behold you thus. I wish immensely to console and to reassure you, understanding, somehow, that it is on my account that your tears flow. I wish desperately to make you understand that I am beside you all the time, but I do not seem able to make you comprehend this. I touch your black hair

that I love, I place my hand upon your shoulder, I try to whisper in your ear, but you do not seem to hear or heed me, and you say, over and over, 'Mathieu, Mathieu!'

"And then something in me tells me, 'You do not need to tell her. Her heart will tell her for you, Mathieu.'

"And then I awake, in the trenches, stiff and muddy and with a frightful beard and very tired and dirty—but happy, because I have seen you and my home, even though only in my sleep.

"I have thought of this my dream constantly, for it comes to me that this is my sign. Remember it, my wife, my adored one. And if that hour arrives when you weep and say, 'Mathieu, Mathieu!' be sure, be very sure, that I shall be nearer you than I was in my dream, I shall be beside you all the while. Yes, I shall be allowed to be beside you, because I have loved you greatly, but I have not allowed my love for you to stand between me and my duty. Because of which, *le bon Dieu* will not forget his poor *poilu*. He will allow me to come near to you, because He is Love itself."

Angélique added that letter to the others lying like a gift between Jeanne and Mary. That night she went from bed to bed, looking long and long upon the sleeping faces of Mathieu's children. The littlest girl was her father's truest image; his the curling hair, the candid brow, the mouth so firm and sweet and patient. Beside this child the mother knelt, and took the small hand and held it against her breast. At the touch, the child started in her sleep and smiled—Mathieu's funny, twisted smile, with something dear and secret about it, something at once grave and merry and tender. A tear dropped upon the child's hand; yet it gave the mother a curious and painful happiness to be thus near the child who was like her father.

Compelled to assume entire charge,

called upon to make her own decisions, Angélique was developing an executive ability, a business generalship, that left the near-by ranchers who came in contact with her filled with a respectful astonishment. They might have trouble with their labor; she did not. Under her management, there was teamwork. She paid her extra workers no more and no less than they received from others, but the food she set before them, the quarters she assigned them, were better. She looked after them, unobtrusively, as she looked after her own sons. They were glad to work for the big, beautiful woman, who was so simple and so motherly. They understood and appreciated her desire to have the ranch as perfect and as profitable as care and labor and good management could make it, when the husband came back to it. They were willing to help her toward it—and they did. If the man's love for his wife and his children had not stood between him and his duty, the woman's grief and anxiety were not allowed to weaken her work. She learned how gallant a thing it can be to be a woman.

On a peculiarly clear and calm evening, in the late summer, she had strolled down to the gate. The children, all except young Mathieu, had just begun the year's term at the mission school, and the mother always waited here for them. She loved to watch her hungry little army come charging home, with a clatter of hoofs in the home lane, and shouts to the Indian ponies, and laughter, and shrill calls of "Mother, mother!" To-night they would be later than usual, because of some small pleasantries planned by the mission folks.

Angélique had cause for anxious thought. She was fronting a new terror. Young Mathieu was fretting, as an eaglet who is ready for flight. He was insisting that his father needed

him now more than did his mother, that at home his younger brothers could fill his place, and he should go to fill somebody's place in the trenches. He was saying that, big and tall and strong as he was, for all his youth they would take him now. Angélique had held him in check thus far, but she knew that he must go. She wished that she might, for just a few minutes, see his father, to talk this thing over, although she knew quite well what the father's word would be.

Far off, a speck upon the long road, she saw the rider coming. She thought, for the moment, it would be young Mathieu. But no; it was only one of the mission Indians. They were always riding to and fro, and she watched this one indifferently enough. As he neared the ranch gate, he held up a package of mail; and a moment later he had dismounted from his brown-and-white calico pony. Silently and stolidly he presented her letters, leaped upon his mount, and was off.

There were the usual newspapers, tied together, and uppermost a long, official-looking envelope—nothing else. Angélique snatched at the letter, which bore the French stamp. It was not, however, addressed in Mathieu's familiar writing. Her heart fluttered sickeningly. Perhaps—he was wounded—There was the address of the war office in the upper corner.

Like one in a dream, she opened it. Mathieu's name leaped out at her, and then the brave, stern, splendid, terrible: "*Mort pour la patrie.*"

The envelope held, too, a short and touching letter from his colonel, and a medal. And that was all.

It was a very beautiful evening. The fields of heaven, wherein the little lost children who are the lambs of God play among the star flowers in the fadeless grass, were no more calm and peaceful.

Angélique lifted her face, with a sort of bewildered and questioning terror.

This thing seemed incredible, monstrous, impossible. Here, warm and bright, full of comfort and repose, breathing the very atmosphere of home, lay the ranch house, the home Mathieu had built, the home to which he had loved to come at night and stretch his great legs before the fire, a child upon each knee and the ruddy light falling upon their happy faces. Angélique knew now that the fires upon such hallowed hearths kindle the beacons upon the hills of heaven.

"Mort pour la patrie!"

And yet to-night the children would come home, laughing and chattering. There would be light, and the sleek, comfortable cat purring to the boiling teakettle's tune; and then would come the pleasant, homely clatter around the well-spread table, the good, wholesome, hungry smell of food—all, all the dear sights and sounds and scents of home. And afterward, in lowered and softened voices, there would be talk of the father. Then candles alight, and prayers for the one—*mort pour la patrie*.

A wind with a hint of chill in it came down from the mountains and brought with it the balsamed breath of pine and spruce and fir. And then a sound came—the Angelus.

The woman whose man had died for his country, whose eldest born was about to go down into the trenches, fell upon her knees. Anguish laid hold upon her; sobs shook her; she beat upon her breast.

"Mathieu, Mathieu! I am here, Mathieu; the children are here; the warm, safe, happy home that I have kept for you waits to welcome you. Dear heart, true heart, come home!"

Lower and lower yet she bent, until the black hair he had loved touched the dust, and her tears fell like winter rain, bleak and seeming futile; and the far, sad bells called and called, and the dark grew and grew. She had not imagined

that a soul could feel so alone in the big universe as hers felt in that hour.

And then in the sky a piled cloud fell asunder, and the torn borders shone with sweeping fringes of silver. Dim as a bank of vapor rose the hills whence the sun had set, and above them, trembled the evening star.

As if his lips had been at her ear, as if his hand had been upon her shoulder, she remembered. He would be near her, as he had bidden her remember, in just this hour. He would be here, because he had greatly loved her—and God is Love itself.

Something within her arose as if on wings to meet the sureness of his faith, the greatness of his sacrifice. She, too, could climb Pisgah heights, although her road lay by way of Calvary.

It was growing darker. There were more and more stars. The children would soon be home, and there must be lights in the rooms, and warm food upon the table, and the mother's welcoming kiss for them; and then the mother's heart upon which they might weep their father's loss, and a calm word to stern young Mathieu—*"Go."* A love grown bigger and diviner by loss must keep home warm and safe. This is what it means to be a woman.

She got to her feet, her letter held against her breast like a living thing. As the man, unafraid, unconquerable, had faced and met death, so the woman faced and met life, and said to its worst terrors, fear and loneliness: *"You shall not pass!"* Her face had fallen into quietness, and her eyes, for all their mortal pain, were clear and shining. Once, on a night of darkness long ago, she had thought she heard the voices of women, across gulfs and out of deeps. She heard them now, a mightier and a clearer chorus. In time to the failing bells, she lifted hers to join them:

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to Thy word."

One Day in Bethlehem

By Salomón de la Selva

I.

THE Virgin stood, a little out of heaven
(The shepherds having gone and the Wise Kings)
Troubled, not knowing how the lovely things,
Might keep that these too sudden friends had given.
What if the milk should spoil and the cool cheese
Turn hot and biting! She was very tired;
All this was too much more than she desired,
And all she wanted was a little peace.

Why had they come? She turned to where He lay,
Her king and heaven's king, so helpless there
And like a bit of sunshine on the hay,
And would have wept, but did not wish to weep,
And would have prayed, but she forgot all prayer,
And only yawned and smiled and went to sleep.

II.

The Virgin yawned and smiled and went to sleep.
But when He woke her, pulling at her side,
Such was the joy it gave her, such the pride,
She was a woman surely! From the deep
Of her own self she knew that He had sprung,
And was all hers, all hers. Still, at her womb,
She felt Him drawing life, wrapped there in gloom
As in light now, clinging as now He clung.

And she would never wean Him. It was strange
Some women did the thing and made them grow
That should be babies always, never change.
And yet she wanted Him to be a straight,
Delightful man to all the world. And so
She mused and doubted and relied on fate.

III.

The Virgin doubted and relied on fate,
Feeling that, after all, these things were far,
And that all children, grown to manhood, are
What mothers make them. She would watch and wait
Upon His every need, and be His friend,
He, the fulfilled expression of her mind,
Rich with the things that motherhood divined,
The gold in her that it was His to spend.

She was so steeped in thought she did not hear
Hard little hoofs that made a noise like rain
About the fastened window, till a clear
Piping aroused her, and she laughed to see

Young satyrs press their noses on the pane,
And felt this pagan visit had to be.

IV.

The Virgin felt this visit had to be.
She did not fear; was she not there to guard?
Of course she had the power to retard
Their knowing Him, begging their courtesy
To come some other day. But why begin
With lying for His sake? Besides, they could
Relieve her once for all of all this food
That troubled her to keep. She let them in.

The satyrs came, all young, not shaggy yet,
And somewhat timid, somewhat glad and keen,
Like little children fearing to forget
The manners taught them, and they looked with eyes
As clear as water, and with sharp teeth clean
They ate the presents of the meek and wise.

V.

They ate the presents of the meek and wise.
They seemed to eat with all their senses, so
Their nostrils widened and their eyes would flow;
And swallowing was noisy—gurgles, cries,
And easy chokings. Oh, delight! Oh, joy!
And when they finished, they approached the Child
With much of unction, and one satyr smiled
And asked the Virgin was it girl or boy.

They asked to touch Him, and they touched and smelled
And tickled Him, to see Him laugh. One spoke:
"I was the first to know! 'Has the spring swelled
The tips of trees,' I said, 'that in the air
There is a smell of budding lime and oak?'"
And then all chattered of their fancies there.

VI.

The satyrs chattered of their fancies there,
With curious wisdom satyrs have. One said:
"To me the smell was like a flower bed,
A pink and white and pale-blue smell. My hair
Went creeping over me. I cried: 'The spring!'"
Another satyr said: "I thought it was
The smell of earth beneath the bending grass
When tempest threatens, and I could not sing."

"To me," another said, "it seemed to be
The smell of honey, sweet and sweet and sweet."
"Fruit, I imagined, ripened on the tree,"
Another said. "You know the smell of fruit

And how it makes you want to pluck and eat!"
The Virgin trembled, very pale and mute.

VII.

The Virgin trembled, very pale and mute,
And reached for Him and held Him to her breast,
But the young satyrs laughed at her unrest,
And she laughed, too. She let them touch one foot
Of Him, that wriggled, full of tiny toes.
The satyrs marveled at this curious shape
That had soft flatnesses, like a white grape
Pressed in the bunch, that moved just like a nose!

And so the long day passed. The plain before
That house in Bethlehem began to fade.
The Virgin led the satyrs to the door,
Holding the Child as in the images,
All full of grace and smiling, not afraid.
And Jesus blessed them, and they went in peace.

VIII.

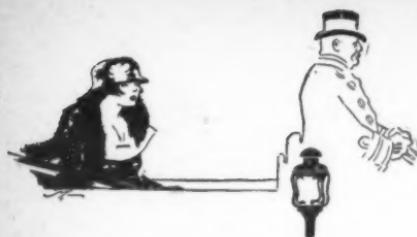
Sweet Jesus blessed them, and they went in peace,
Weary, perhaps, or happy; and a strange
Feeling crept into them. They felt a change
Control their flesh, a stiffening of the knees,
And roots pushed from the hoofs and seized the soil;
Their arms like branches spread, like leaves their hair.
They were an olive orchard growing fair;
The sap in them was odorous of oil.

The Virgin, far away, crooned lullaby,
Content, with no presentiment of death.
Elsewhere, a grievous tree was growing high.
The olives bloomed for over thirty years.
One night He came to them with heavy breath
And cried aloud, and blood was in His tears.

IX. *Prayer.*

Christ cried aloud, and blood was in His tears,
So bitter was the war that He waged there.
A sweat of ice possessed Him, and despair
Cut all the fibers of His heart with shears
Sharp as desire. O Lady, fancy Him,
Your little one, afraid in that long night!
And you were seeking, desolate. And blight
Was over life, and all your paths were grim.

Aye, for that moment, Lady, look on me
With mercy now and use your gracious power
To blind my mother, that she may not see
How I am broken and with low-bowed head.
Remember how He struggled in that hour
Until, except for death, the man was dead!



His Exotic

By Rebecca Hooper Eastman

OUT of the fifty or so letters that had come, Stephen had cared to reread only two. These were from the friends who never failed, in any joy or sorrow, to write understandingly; friends who, in a way that was nothing short of miraculous, never expected any answer until they received one.

Mrs. Worthing wrote:

DEAR STEPHEN: In spite of all the odium connected with your separation from Yvonne, I hope that you will not be offended if I say how glad I am that the deed is done. Now that she is definitely out of your life, I will confess that this is the next to the hardest letter I have ever written to you. The hardest was when you announced your engagement to her.

At that time, I granted you her compelling charm. I acknowledge it still—heavens, her charm was her undoing!—but placing dependence on her was like building your house on a quicksand.

It is impossible for me to understand how you have allowed her to keep little Phyllis, when the court gave her to you. In my opinion, Phyllis ought not to spend a single day with Yvonne!

Please come and dine with me as soon as you feel like seeing me, and remember how glad I am—except in regard to Phyllis. Loyally, as always, dear friend,

JANE WORTHING.

While he was absently tearing this letter into neat little squares, Stephen set about rereading the other:

DEAR STEVE: Like all your friends, I am inexpressibly relieved to think that you are not to be further handicapped by Yvonne. It was slow torture to see you involved in a perpetual triangle, although, judging from the number of men I heard about, it was really more of a septangular proposition.

I can't remember who said that a certain woman was the most charming *good* woman he had ever known, but I have always thought it applied to Yvonne, and I still think so. She could keep more men dangling than any other lady it has been my lot to observe. That the affair with Parlington did not end with dangling was *his* fault—not hers. It being her first adventure with a cave gentleman, she didn't recognize the beast. I believe it was a genuine surprise to her to find that you cannot forever toy with passion.

You will think that I'm abusing the privilege of an old friend, and that I'm lacking in delicacy, and perhaps I am. But I'm going to say this now, because life is short, and I want you to get used to the idea. I think that you ought to marry again as soon as it's decent. You take your life too earnestly to spend it drifting round clubs. Men like you *must* have homes!

This next I positively *couldn't* say to your face, although I am bold enough to put it on paper. Why the devil didn't you marry Eleanor Geer in the first place—before you saw Yvonne? Having missed your first opportunity, don't be fool enough to miss the second. I'd like to remind you that every one knows that Eleanor Geer has cared for you always. None of us having yet mastered the art of growing younger—in years—it behooves you to get as much as possible out of your late thirties by spending them with Eleanor. Break the rule about advice and take this. Abjectly, as usual,

HILARY.

N. B.—Once more, without at all belittling the seriousness of your trouble, I must congratulate you on your freedom.

As Stephen neatly destroyed this second letter, he recalled the fact that all the other letters had tactfully sounded this same congratulatory note. And although it had all happened months and months ago, people were

still occasionally congratulating him. Congratulations, indeed! Although he couldn't have gone on living with Yvonne after the culminating affair with Partington, it seemed impossible to formulate any working philosophy now that he was rid of her.

In pre-Yvonne days, he had, as Hilary and every one else knew, expected to marry Eleanor Geer some time. He had contemplated the event with sober pleasure and no anticipation. Marrying Eleanor Geer would be like depositing a substantial sum of money in the bank instead of spending it for something of great beauty which one needed artistically, and not materially. And while he was making up his mind to commit himself, he happened to go to a dinner party at which Yvonne sat beside him, marked him for her own, and left him with no other purpose on earth except the mad desire to spend his days with her.

Even now, he couldn't forget her as she had appeared that first night. She had seemed like the spirit of all that is fine and beautiful as she had entered his friend's drawing-room—slender, self-possessed, about her the unravished sweetness of a summer dawn. The very sight of her unmanned the most prosaic of his sex, and convinced most women that it was useless to be jealous of her.

The instinctive criticism of Yvonne had always been that she gave the impression of being too exquisite to last, as if she would wilt under the commonplace and die before she could face hard facts. But although he had realized that she was as ephemeral as a cloud of butterflies, Stephen had married her and, in so doing, had abandonedly spent his splendid substance for something perishable. And now the perishable had long since perished.

The day that he happened to meet Eleanor Geer in a crowded part of lower Fifth Avenue, after the first

quick intake of breath, she looked him squarely in the eyes and asked him to come the following Saturday afternoon to see her garden and stay to dine. Although it was over a year since his trouble, the remote, solitary, miserable look in his kindly eyes made Eleanor feel as if the hideous thing had happened yesterday, and she left him rebelling furiously against the fact that he had been taken in by the evanescent Yvonne.

It was a strange experience to be going out to the Geers to dine, to approach the Dream House, once more unencumbered, yet fettered by a hundred subtle ties. This first visit was bound to be awkward. The Geers lived out of town, and as Stephen caught the first white gleam of their stately house through the small young leaves of the elms, he gave way to the fascination of the Dream House. It was built after the fashion of the square three-story houses of old Salem, but beyond this general resemblance, it was unique, because Eleanor Geer had dreamed it, every bit, down to the minutest detail of the great fireplaces, and the furnishing of every room. Her dream had been so artistic that the architect she had employed to execute it had often asked her what she had had for supper that night. And the oddest part of it all was the fact that she had dreamed all the endless detail of it in about ten minutes. She remembered, indistinctly, as she fell asleep, hearing the clock strike eleven, and she had wakened at a quarter past, when the telephone had rung.

At first sight, the exterior of the house was almost too classic in conception, but afterward, when you grew to know it, it somehow softened into beauty. As Stephen walked up the path toward it, for the first time in several years, its uncompromising squareness became suddenly revolting. He knew that the doorways were

graceful and that the cornices were cunningly artistic, but he couldn't get the feel of it.

The butler said that Miss Geer was in the garden, weeding, and that if Mr. Westervelt would walk down the brick path, he would find her there somewhere. As he went in search of her, Stephen suspected Eleanor of khaki, and he found her in it, with wide, sensible shoes, her father's old gloves, and a veteran of a hat. On her forehead was a smudge, and she was healthily and unbecomingly warm.

"I suppose you expected to find me waiting for you in my polite clothes," she said. "But I *did* want to get my weeding done! And if you weren't so dressy, Stephen, you might help."

"I'd love to help," he said eagerly.

This first getting together would be easier if they could both be working with their hands. He took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and drew a long, comfortable breath.

"Don't you like the smell of freshly turned earth?" inquired Eleanor briskly.

"It would show an unsound mind *not* to like it."

As they weeded, the Geers' deaf gardener trundled about after them with his wheelbarrow, grumbling like a leisurely old bumblebee. Their conversation was fitful and to the point.

"Weeding a garden is such a legitimate way in which to vent one's variance with life," observed Stephen.

"It would scare you, Stephen, if you could see the rages I've got rid of among my flowers."

"When we're through, it would be wonderful—if we went swimming in the river, as we used to."

"My program included a swim. Your same old bathing suit is ready. I looked it up this morning."

Dinner was served on a wide rear veranda that overlooked the garden and the river. Mr. and Mrs. Geer, who

had managed, rather remarkably for them, to go on approving of Stephen in spite of his marriage with Yvonne, were overjoyed to see him. It was plain to see that they hoped that Eleanor and Stephen would lose no time in settling down. Their frankly cordial manner filled Stephen with mute gratitude. It was so good to sit again at that familiar board, and afterward to take his coffee with Eleanor on the moon-drenched terrace in the old way. And yet—

"Eleanor!"

"Stephen?"

"What is your dress made of?"

"Silk."

"What kind of silk, I mean."

"To be entirely specific, three-dollar-a-yard taffeta. It stands alone."

"It looks as if it might."

How hard and brittle it must feel! Yvonne had once told him that they put powdered stone and glass and marble dust into stiff silks—that that was why they were so unbeautiful.

"Don't you like my frock, Stephen?"

"Oh, yes, very much."

"I'm going to enlarge the garden and build a pergola," said Eleanor abruptly. "You remember that I didn't dream anything about the grounds, because the telephone rang, unkindly, just as I was stepping from the Dream House into the Dream Garden. This afternoon the pergola plans came, and I want you to help me decide about them."

She walked into the house with firm steps, and when she returned, switched on an electric light, banishing the mystical moonbeams and all the poetry.

As Stephen watched her move, rather bustlingly, he wondered anew how it was that she could dream such artistic things and be romantic enough to execute them, and be herself so unflinchingly practical. It never occurred to him that she found it impossible to sit with him in the moonlight with qui-

ely folded hands, or that she was too glad to be with him to endure his presence calmly.

When it came train time, she drove him to the station in her new car and stood on the platform and waved to him until the end of his train was a vanishing speck in the distance. And all the way home, the unemotional Eleanor Geer cried hot tears of thankfulness at having had one more evening with him.

Meantime, Stephen found his way back into the car, and instead of reading or dozing the short time away, as would have been natural after all the fresh air and exercise and bountiful dinner, he grew nervous and fidgety, as if his endurance were almost at an end.

"What confounded thing has got into me now?" he wondered, disgusted at his feeling of groundless apprehension. "It's surely more than the reaction after agreeing with Eleanor for six or seven hours at a stretch."

Although he lived within easy walking distance of the Grand Central, his presentiments were so strong that he rushed home in a taxi and, running up the steps, let himself into his house in a panic.

His housekeeper hurried downstairs to meet him with an apologetic cough.

"Mr. Westervelt, this telegram came for you this morning, just after you left your office. We've been trying to get you—everywhere."

The telegram, from Virginia Hot Springs, said simply:

Phyllis is very ill and asks for you.

YVONNE.

All that Stephen could ever recall of his hasty preparations for departure was the fact that when, after maddening delays, he finally got Yvonne on the long-distance telephone, the voice in which she said that Phyllis was no worse sounded unnatural and trembly.

5

The repentant frenzy over having lost months he might have spent with Phyllis kept him sleepless and chafing until finally, his endless journey ended, it was morning, and he was being shown into Yvonne's private sitting room. Yvonne came to the door herself, looking younger and very lovely and—afraid.

"Phyllis?"

"You can't see her yet, Stephen."

He had almost forgotten the disturbing cadences of her voice.

"There's hope?"

"Yes."

She softly closed the door that led into the next room, and as she did so, Stephen noted her grace, and that her delicate lilac-colored draperies were so soft and light that her least movement stirred them, every one, and brought fragrance from their folds. He noted her beauty with that meticulous care with which one observes unimportant trifles on painful occasions. At the door, Yvonne turned and faced him.

"I don't care what you do to me, Stephen, or what you say," she began flamingly. "I've deceived you about Phyllis. I sent for you because I can't get through another day without seeing you."

He was so tired, after the sleepless trip and the suspense, that he scarcely grasped what she said.

"You say Phyllis isn't—ill?"

"Phyllis is riding horseback with her governess."

With no appearance of apprehension, Yvonne seated herself effectively in a great chair by the window and rested her fingers lightly on its arms, waiting for the storm. In her eyes, however, was a desperate, new, wistful hunger for him.

"Which way did Phyllis go?"

"The road round the links."

As he went to the door, Yvonne was after him, in a panic.

"You'll come back—after you see her?"

"I don't know."

As he saw his child riding toward him on her pony, pale with joy, he told himself that she was worth all the disillusionment he had been through with Yvonne. The little girl fairly strangled him in her embrace; she cried with the relief of him; and when he took her in the automobile, she sat in his lap with both arms round his neck.

"You *came!*" she cried.

It was all that she could seem to say, and she said it again and again, at first almost hysterically, then thankfully, and then laughingly, until, after so much repetition, it turned into the most delicious of jokes.

Yvonne stood waiting for them in the midst of her sitting room, in the very spot where Stephen had left her. In her cheeks burned a painful scarlet, and she didn't meet Stephen's eyes.

"You'll stay until the five-o'clock train?" she asked, the moment Phyllis went to make herself tidy.

"I can't be seen with you, Yvonne."

"I can't let you go."

As he made no reply, she said tumultuously:

"Wouldn't it be possible for us to begin—all over again?" Her voice caught in her throat, she hesitated, and then went on with dreadful haste, for fear she wouldn't be through by the time Phyllis had changed her gown. "I haven't had anything to do with any one in all these months. I couldn't. I never shall again. I'm sure of myself at last, and I never was before. You may not believe it, but you were always first, even when I was flirting desperately with some one else. I couldn't have flirted so light-heartedly if I hadn't been so sure of you underneath. There's never but one man who matters, and you have always been that one."

"My dear Yvonne," he said quietly,

"you don't seem to have grasped the fact that our relation is a closed book. In fact, the book is not only closed, but it has been thrown away." He couldn't endure any more of this. "I'm taking Phyllis back to New York with me," he said.

"Stephen!"

"I've been—uncomfortable—since your telegram. Will you please see that her things are packed immediately?"

"Yes."

All her scarlet faded.

"I'll wait downstairs. Mademoiselle will go with us, of course. Please send them both down in half an hour."

It was impossible to make any pretence of saying good-by to Yvonne in this mood; he knew her too well. To try to say good-by would have been to stay, forever explaining and forever not saying good-by.

While he waited for Phyllis, he wrote a letter:

DEAR MRS. WORTHING: The somewhat perilous experiment that I was trying to work out when I allowed Phyllis to remain with Yvonne has proved successful. I feared that Yvonne's impulse would be to do something that would make her even more notorious, and I knew that Phyllis was the only restraining power on earth. Yvonne has always been in awe of Phyllis' unequivocal eyes and mind. And for Phyllis' sake, I wanted Phyllis' mother not to make any further mistakes. It is over a year, now, and Yvonne has come to a realizing sense of things, so I am taking Phyllis home. Perhaps it is still too soon to say, but I have the greatest hope that Yvonne will readjust herself quietly now.

You cannot guess how relieved and jubilant I shall be to have my daughter with me. I'm going to spend a lot of time at home. Affectionately,

STEPHEN.

"You and I are such *old friends*," hazarded Stephen, the next time he lunched with Hilary, "that nothing I can do or say can help or hinder now."

"With which preface, go ahead."

"Is there any sort of chance, in your

opinion, after a woman has gone wrong
—of her *not* going wrong again?"

"That, of course, is the deuce of it," replied Hilary. And then he turned positively cold with apprehension and blurted: "Don't—marry—Yvonne—again?"

"It's wasted energy for you to get purple in the face, Hilary. I have no such intention."

"Did you read my letter—in which I brazenly referred to your marrying somebody else?"

"I've already been out to the Dream House. Unfortunately for your match-making proclivities, a friendship can't be turned into love."

"You can't tell anything about it—in one interview."

"I don't agree with you. Eleanor and I, even in the old days, never seemed to tend much to the romantic."

"The trouble is that you went out there expecting to find that she was another Yvonne. And she isn't Yvonne, and never will be. Yvonne has spoiled you for a woman of Eleanor's type. At present, you're incapable of appreciating Eleanor."

"I appreciate her so much that I've telephoned and asked if I might bring Phyllis out next Saturday."

"I shall await reports."

And Hilary lit a cigarette with a satisfied air.

When Phyllis saw Eleanor Geer, she smiled and made the usual curtsey, but her eyes were troubled.

"When mother went gardening, she wore a pink smock, and a great, big white hat with pink roses and ribbons tied under her chin. Her gloves were white, too."

Eleanor paid no attention to this remark, unless it was responsible for her walking along virtuously in her old clothes.

"Let's leave the weeds and pull up the pindling little plants!" advised Phyllis. "They don't *want* to grow,

and the weeds do. And they're so pretty and feathery."

"The plants want to grow if the weeds will only let them," replied Eleanor firmly, and she turned to Stephen. "I don't have any plants in my garden that aren't *happy* to grow there," she said. "I don't bother with exotics at all. What's the use of tending a sick orchid, when you can be enjoying all this?"

She glanced maternally at the quaint and riotous beauty of her perennials. Stephen smiled appreciatively at her.

"That's because you have sound sense, Eleanor, and never attempt the impossible. Now if *I* were gardening, I should be forever wanting to try my hand with orchids and the like. I should fail with them, of course, and be miserable about it. But I should like the process of trying and failing and being miserable. I should hate raising things I was sure of."

"For your own good, I advise you to confine your thoughts to perennials," said Eleanor. And then she blushed deeply, and complained of the heat, and said that it was time to go swimming.

"This isn't a pretty bathing suit," objected Phyllis, frowning at the child's suit Eleanor had that morning purchased.

"There's no point in having your bathing suit pretty," said Eleanor, as if that settled it. "Can you swim, Phyllis?"

"No, Miss Geer."

"It's time you learned. I'll give you your first lesson to-day."

Phyllis surveyed Miss Geer with incipient respect. Even if she *was* unattractive and dressed badly, she had a way about her that made one vastly comfortable, as if one rested safely on her great strength. Instinctively Phyllis had missed a mother's steady hand. Of the two, Phyllis had steadied her mother.

"Come again next Saturday, and I'll

give you another swimming lesson," promised Eleanor Geer, in order to get the child out of the water.

She took Phyllis up to her bedroom and helped her dress, after which Phyllis perched on the edge of a Sheraton chair and watched Miss Geer get ready for dinner. When she let down her shining chestnut hair, Phyllis gave a cry of delight.

"Miss Geer, Miss *Geer!* Did you know that your hair comes down to your knees?"

"I believe I did, Phyllis."

"Mother's hair is only down to her shoulders, but she makes it look a lot. People *think* it's awfully long. Don't braid in your hair so tight, Miss Geer, please. Mother says that hair wants to lie soft."

After Eleanor had yielded a little on the hair question, Phyllis was dismayed afresh when she saw her hostess rustling complacently into the three-dollar taffeta.

"Mother says that ladies ought to wear soft silks, hand made, or chiffons, and real lace."

"Humph!"

"What is it, Miss Geer?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, please don't pull in your hair again!"

"Come along, Phyllis. Dinner is ready."

During dinner, Phyllis' eyes rested meditatively on Miss Geer. How lovely she would look if she would only let herself! Inwardly, Phyllis was dressing Miss Geer in her mother's gowns—one after another. Miss Geer, for the nonce, became Phyllis' enormous paper doll, and Phyllis' mother's clothes were her wardrobe. She dressed and undressed Miss Geer endlessly, all through dinner.

"I suppose we shall have to go home early, on account of Phyllis," said Stephen reluctantly, as he set down his

coffee cup. "May we come again—next week?"

"Of course. I've promised Phyllis another swimming lesson."

"You're sure we aren't in the way?"

"Stephen!"

A fire leaped into her eyes and died away, a fire whose existence took Stephen by surprise and temporarily dizzied him. Was that marvelous person who had momentarily looked out of Eleanor Geer's eyes the *real* Eleanor?

It was on the following Monday night that Stephen, in his own room, dressing for dinner, overheard something unexpected.

"Mummy! You're prettier than ever!" came Phyllis' clear voice from her bedroom across the hall.

"*You* are dearer than ever!" remarked Yvonne's rather tired soprano.

Stephen hurriedly finished dressing and went down to the library. The last thing he could do was to have any sort of interview with Yvonne before Phyllis. The library commanded a view of the front stairs. He was fairly sure that Yvonne would come down before any of the servants saw her. She had undue respect for the smaller conventions. Servants and what servants thought mattered to her immensely. And how had she entered the house without seeing any servant? In a minute, just as he had expected, she strolled slowly down the broad staircase and came toward him. After the first glance, he avoided looking at her; her beauty was too potent.

"How did you get in?" he asked stiffly.

"With my latchkey. I kept it because I knew that I should probably want to come back—some day."

"Of course you realize that you have no legal right here?"

"It seems hard that one mistake should never be lived down."

"You must go, now, Yvonne, and you mustn't come again."

"I haven't seen any men at all. And it's been more than a year."

"A year isn't very long."

She turned from him, and he thought that she was going, but she went into the drawing-room, instead, and stood in a corner of the fireplace.

"Here is where Donald Drew first kissed me," she announced relentlessly. "Donald is an aviator—in France. He may, at this moment, be flying over the German lines." She seated herself in the "love chair." "Anderson Brown sat here with me when he said he couldn't go on living without me. He was killed—driving his ambulance." She crossed the room and curled up on the davenport. "Young Willard and I were here when he asked me to run away with him. He was in a lifeboat that was shelled by a submarine."

"And Partington?" asked Stephen, playing the grim game out as the shortest way to be rid of her.

Involuntarily she caught her breath.

"I don't know—— But you see how completely they have all disappeared. The other two have both been married. It seems as if they had all conspired with one another to show me how little I counted. And you——"

She came and stood so close to him that he was obliged to look at her.

"The depth of my misery is that I completely realize what I have done. And I came here because it is your fault that I am in this state of mind. If you hadn't left Phyllis with me, I should have flung myself into some affair or other before I had time to think. But you *did* leave Phyllis with me, so that I couldn't get away from the stigma of divorce, or forget, with the sort of people who wanted to help me forget. It was the refinement of cruelty to get rid of me and then hold me like that, by means of Phyllis, and make me think—endlessly!"

"You see, Yvonne," he said quietly, "it would be easier to put faith in what you say if you didn't constantly deceive me. You say that you have come to your senses, but you telegraphed me a plain lie—about Phyllis being ill. I *can't* believe in you. The fact that you used such a means to try to bring about a reconciliation refutes everything you say."

"How can I show you that I am in dead earnest, Stephen?"

"I can't bargain with you, Yvonne. The thing is finished."

"It is never finished—while you and I live!" she said, with the irritating weight of conviction.

She went into the hall, adjusted her veil by the hall mirror, smiled wanly at Stephen in the glass, opened the front door, and closed it behind her so noiselessly that it might almost have been a spirit that withdrew.

The following Saturday, Stephen and Phyllis motored out to the Dream House. Eleanor had sent Stephen a simple little note, asking him to spend Sunday, but the paper on which it was written burned his hands and the words engraved themselves on his heart.

She met her guests with comical self-consciousness, owing to the fact that she wore a new garden hat. It boasted neither pink roses nor a bow beneath her chin, but it was so becoming that it changed her into a more gracious personality. And when it came dinner time, she appeared in a gown of leaf-green chiffon, hand made, with wide white satin collar and cuffs—a gown that turned her chestnut hair to burnished copper.

"This frock was bought for Phyllis," she declared, when her father and mother and Stephen made a great to-do about it. "Does Phyllis like it?"

"Yes, Miss Geer. It makes you look as beautiful as the ladies in my Maxfield Parrish picture books."

After dinner, as soon as Phyllis had

gone to bed, the garden plans came out. Not that Eleanor intended to spend the whole evening on—plans! Her life happiness was, mercifully, again within her grasp, and she must take it. She realized, with a deadly certainty, that she might have had Stephen before if she hadn't expected him to come *all* the way. Therefore, she would come to meet him. For that purpose, she had taken Phyllis' unconscious hints and deliberately let herself be more charming.

As they bent over the plans, they were interrupted by the butler's bringing in a card for Eleanor. When she read the name, the color mounted to her cheeks, and she looked so excited that Stephen leaned toward her as if suddenly a veil had fallen from his eyes. Phyllis was right. Eleanor Geer was beautiful. How much more beautiful she was at this moment than Yvonne had ever been! For the first time, before Eleanor's glowing splendor, he felt that Yvonne's beauty had lacked something.

"I have a caller, Stephen," said Eleanor hesitatingly. "You are sure that she asked for me?" she inquired of the butler.

"Yes, Miss Geer."

"I don't think I shall be very long, Stephen."

When she went into what was called, quaintly, the "little parlor," a room at the left of the front door, Eleanor closed the door behind her and met her caller without a trace of the emotion that stirred within her.

"You wished to speak with me?"

"Yes, Miss Geer. Without wasting your time in preliminaries, I may as well say that I came because it seemed the fairest and kindest way. I am in the habit of getting what I want. I always have. I have no intention of giving Stephen up. I intend to win him back again. I thought you ought to know."

The two women looked at each other in expectant silence.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Yvonne curiously.

"It's queer. All your sentences begin with 'I.'"

Yvonne looked a little puzzled, and then dismissed the remark as irrelevant.

"Er—haven't you anything to say, Miss Geer?"

"I think not." Eleanor waited a second, and then said quietly: "If you've finished, I'll ask you to excuse me."

"May I see Stephen?"

"I'll tell him that you are here."

She found Stephen studying the plans absently, and his eyes welcomed her return.

"My caller is—Yvonne. And she wants to speak to you."

"Yvonne hasn't dared—"

"She's waiting for you, Stephen, in the little parlor."

At that moment, without words, the full realization of their love for each other was born. They lived an eternity of understanding in that moment.

"Yvonne is waiting," said Eleanor.

As if in a dream, Stephen turned and went toward the little parlor.

TO BE CONTINUED.





The Devil Among the Skins

By E. Goodwin

Author of "The Caravan Man," etc.

YOU must understand that the truth of this story is not vouched for. Folk round Tamworth swear it's all true, but proof there is none. But I believe in it. It's the sort of tale one likes to think true. It so easily might be, and I put it to you, wouldn't life be a brisker, jollier affair if this sort of thing could really happen? This tale of the English Midlands in the time of good King John, when roads were few, and bad at that; when no doubt there really were traveling tanners who went about picking up hides on the cheap and carrying them home to tan into good sound leather; when a man might lose himself as like as not on a moor on a dark night, and stumble on a surprising and humorous adventure, and get a supper by his wits; when women were frail—in the year 1200, you understand—and monks were human, at times, and a humble Englishman might not only believe firmly in the devil, but be quite prepared, with a friend at his back, to encounter him—all this, I say, might be true, every word of it, and I suggest to you that you make up your mind to believe it, and you'll enjoy it as much as I did when first a Tamworth man told it me.

Let me remind you that when you go about carrying a pack of raw hides—horse skin, pig skin, ass skin—on

your shoulder, the skins squeak faintly as they rub and slip on one another. Perhaps, by some strange chance, you have not often carried a bundle of raw skins. No? Well, then, pray accept my word for it—it's the point of the story—that raw skins squeak when squeezed or roughly handled in a bundle.

One chill November night, in the year of our Lord 1200 and something, Jack the Tanner, sick of tumbling into ditches in the dark and scrambling out again, flung his pack of raw hides from his aching shoulder. The hides squeaked a faint protest as they struck the soggy ground. Jack kicked them spitefully, and again they squeaked. He sat down on them in doleful mood, and again they squeaked. Jack cursed them, the night, the rain, the cold, with vigor and directness, but most of all he cursed his folly in having attempted to reach Tamworth that night.

He knew now that he should have put up at Tidford. He had been tramping Staffordshire picking up raw hides here and there as cheaply as he could—here and there he had picked up one so very cheaply that its acquisition became a delicate subject to touch on—and now he was hoofing it home to Tamworth, where he would tan the skins into good leather.

He had come a good twelve miles that day from Cadbush to Tidford, and instead of putting up there, like a sensible man, he had allowed his energy to prompt him to set out for Tamworth the same evening. He had been given the road and warned of the danger of losing it in the dark, and now, sure enough, here he was, God knew where, with trees and moor all around him, a pitch-dark night, cold, drizzling, and a great hunger and thirst coming on him. Dead beat, he sat on his pack of skins and cursed.

Suddenly he was aware of a gleam of light in the dark, such as might glimmer from a dimly lit room through an open door. A moment, and it was gone, but already the agile tanner had lifted his pack to his shoulder and was tramping toward the point at which the light had shown. It indicated company, a roof, warmth, a bed, comfort for an empty stomach and an aching back. He strode gayly over the moor in the gloom.

There loomed before him the outline of a small hut of timber and cob. Under the door, and from the rude shutter that closed the window opening, a gleam showed, and he tapped confidently on the door.

He felt sure that on that tap there came a sudden little sound inside the hut, as if of movement, abrupt, startled. Yet there ensued a complete silence, lasting so long that at last the tanner knocked again. Still silence for some seconds, and it was not till he lifted his hand to rap for a third time that the bolts of the door were drawn, the door opened, and a woman's face appeared in the opening.

She was plump and comely in a rustic way, a comfortable-looking woman, just the kind the tanner thought would make one's meal doubly appetizing with her smile and her gossip as one ate. But alas, there was little that indicated prospect of smile or gossip! She let

the door open but a foot or so, and the look on her face, apprehensive as it almost seemed at first, changed swiftly to another that had never a touch of hospitality in it. She scowled.

"What want ye here?" she demanded.

"Summat to eat, dame," replied the tanner, "summat to eat, summat to drink, and a corner to lie in to-night."

Said the woman, "Fare further. There's naught for ye here."

"Fare further, fare further," said the tanner in dismay, "on a night like this? Dame, d'yee see the weather?"

"Weather's naught to do wi' me. Ye must fare on."

The tanner gasped.

"Dame," he said, "'tisn't Christian to send a man tramping further on a night like this. Where's your husband? He'll not turn a stranger away from his door."

She was inexorable.

"My man's away to market, and I'm alone. Get ye gone. Seek what ye want elsewhere." She made to close the door.

"Dame," expostulated the tanner desperately, "I'm no beggar. If ye won't give, will ye sell? I've a penny to my pouch, and I'll pay for what I have. I got in a mire a mile back, and am like to end in one if I fare further through this mirk."

"I tell ye," came the implacable answer, "there's naught for ye here." She began to close the door.

There was nothing for it but the parting shot. The tanner put his foot in the door and unbosomed himself fairly.

"Foul fall you, you fat and frowsty cow! Many a hide I've tanned in my time, but none I'd tan so pleasantly as yours! Evil speed you——"

He got his head out of the doorway just in time. She had swept her hand behind her to the wall, grasped a besom that stood in the corner there, and the next second—whack! The door

hummed as the broom struck it, and hummed again as she clapped it to and bolted it.

"Go drown or freeze in the dark!" was the last the tanner heard from her.

For three seconds, he stood undecided; then miserably he turned away. Such treatment as this in the Midlands, where some sort of hospitality to a stranger was the almost invariable custom, staggered him. But no sooner had he gone a yard or two than he turned back to the hut. The wind was now blowing more wildly, the rain began to slant strongly before it, and there would at least be a lee side to the hut.

Round it he went in the dark, looking and feeling for some trifling shelter, and, sure enough, at the back he found a penthouse, a shack roof on rough uprights, under which was heaped a pile of fagots and smallwood bundles. Among these he crept, glad to rest his weary bones, at least, on ground that was dry, while the rain rattled on the roof. Here, he decided, he would rest till daylight gave him a chance to find the road to Tamworth.

Now, as the tanner crouched there, a melancholy man, there fell on his ear the murmur of voices, coming from nowhere but inside the hut. Evidently there was some one else as well as the woman within. The tanner was curious. He turned on his knees to the wooden wall and, prying about, he found a chink among the planks and, peeping through, discovered that he could see into the hut. And as the tanner looked, "Liar!" he said to himself. "Oh, lying woman!"

For lo, within the hut—the ordinary peasant's dwelling, rough, but not uncomfortable—was not only the woman who had turned him away from her door, but, seated near the fireplace, scarcely a yard away from where the tanner knelt, was a monk, a hugely fat man, coarse, clumsy in build and face, and most offensively content with him-

self and his situation. He smiled at the woman; the woman smiled at him. All was happiness within the hut; only the poor tanner, wet and cold, kneeling uncomfortably outside with his eager eye glued to the chink, felt no content whatever, but a great sense of offense and dissatisfaction.

And now he would listen to their conversation, and to do this, he must needs take his eye from the chink to make room for his ear, and this worried him, for while he looked, he could not hear, and while he heard, he could not see. And when he heard what they talked of, he worried still more, for they spoke of eating and drinking.

"My chuck," said the fat monk, "*Osculare secum est!*" which means, 'What have you got to drink?'"

The answer came with a tender sigh:

"That's you, always thinking of eating and drinking! But never fear, I'm looking after ye. I'll see ye have your fill. What say to a venison pasty?"

"Capital!" said the fat monk. "I ask no better. Aught else?"

"And a white loaf."

"White bread! Mawkin, ye're a wonderful woman! And to drink with it—or before—if ye love me true?"

"What say to a sup of small beer?"

She was smiling archly, under her arm a large leather bottle. The smile on the monk's face faded. The tanner had his ear to the chink at the time, but he almost heard the smile evaporate. He flashed his eye to the hole. The smile was gone.

"Dame," came the monk's voice on the tanner's ear, now back on sentry-go, "dame, small beer's a very good drink, too—for husbands. But it's a long way and a wet from Tamworth to here, and if, when I've come all this way to see ye on a night like this, ye've nothing better to offer me than small beer, then, pasty or no pasty"—he rose grimly—"white bread or no white

bread——” He began to pull his cowl over his head.

“Smell it, taste it,” came the woman’s voice.

There was a second or two’s pause, and then a long-drawn “Ah!” of satisfaction.

“Wine!” said the delighted monk. “Mawkin, little rogue, little tease, ye had me there! Come, my chuck, let’s have them on table and make our feast.”

The tanner’s eye flew again to the chink, and as he peeped, his empty stomach grew clamorous. He ground his teeth. There inside the hut, dry and warm, his elbow on a table drawn near the fire, was the fat monk seated in a roomy chair, surveying with complacent anticipation the setting of the table. First a white cloth was spread—yea, verily, a cloth of fair linen, at sight of which luxury both the monk inside and the tanner outside raised incredulous hands—and on this cloth the woman set a loaf of white bread, and platters and spoons and knives, and the big leather bottle, with two drinking cups of horn. And then she turned toward the oven and, opening the oven door, she took out a pie from which there spread through the room and even through the chink into the tortured nostrils of the hungry tanner such a delicious smell—of crust done to a turn, of meat of rare quality brought to the perfection of readiness in its own incomparable gravy—that the poor tanner could have wept!

And as he knelt there, vainly trying to cudgel from his brain some plan, some contrivance, that should bring him more effectively in touch with that alluring pasty, that fascinating bottle, he saw both the monk and the woman start apprehensively and look toward the door. On the ear of the tanner there fell the sound of footsteps approaching the hut; a whistle shrilled. He saw the monk leap up from his chair with surprising agility. The

woman sprang toward a large oak chest that stood against the wall; she flung up the lid.

“Quick!” she whispered. “In here!”

In flew the monk, bundling himself down. She crammed the end of his robe in after him and clapped down the lid. There came a knocking on the door.

Do you think a stoutish woman of forty, easy and comfortable in her ways, cannot move briskly on occasion? You should have knelt beside the tanner, with a fellow chink to his to peer through! In the wall above where the chest stood was a little cupboard, and into this cupboard there vanished in a thrice all trace of that meal, so lavishly prepared, so untimely cut short. In most miraculous fashion, she contrived to gather in hands and arms, in one comprehensive grab, the pie, the wine, the bread, the platters, the knives, spoons, cloth; she sprang like a deer onto the chest; she flung them into the cupboard, yet without a sound, clapped the door to and buttoned it, and sprang to the hut door, on which another knock was sounding. She opened it.

In came a tall, bony man, with long hair and flowing mustache, and a look more of good humor than of great intelligence—indisputably, the peeping tanner judged, the goodman of the house.

Said the woman, closing the door after him:

“Dickon! What brings ‘ee home so early? It wants three hours of your time, o’ market days.”

“I got wet,” said the bony man, “getting a sheep out of a dike, and thinks I, ‘Home and a dry shirt for you, my lad.’ But by this time I’m walked dry and sharp set for a meal. Supper, missis!”

She set him a meal, but ah, how mean a spread compared with that which had but lately vanished in such a frantic hurry! On the bare table she set a

platter with a loaf of black bread, and from a keg in the corner she filled a horn with small beer. Cheerfully enough did Dickon the Woodman sit him down, but the unseen watcher, with his eye to the chink, grew wroth in his soul.

And then his brow lightened, and a smile of great glee flitted over his face.

"Jack Tanner, Jack Tanner, my lad," he thought, "either you be grown slow-witted or there's a fair supper and a bed waiting for you this night!" He thought a while, pondering his next move; then, grinning cheerfully, he shouldered his pack of hides. "Now, Jack, up and at it!" Round he went to the door of the hut.

As Dickon Woodman was raising his horn to his lips for his first sup of small beer, there came a rapping on his door. Dickon rose, went to the door, and opened. There stood a stranger, with a bundle of raw hides on his shoulder and an affable manner. He doffed his cap to Dick Woodman politely.

"Good evening, master," said he.

"Good evening, mate," replied Dickon, courteous in his turn, as all honest Englishmen prided themselves upon being. "What's for you?"

"I be a traveling tanner," said the stranger. "I ha' lost my way in the dark—I'm a stranger hereabouts—and I come craving a bite, a sup, and a bed."

"Enter, Master Tanner," said the woodman. "Little enow we have, but you're welcome. Wife, set a place."

With a black face, when she saw who the newcomer was, she set a stool at the table, and the tanner came in, bolting the door after him like a well-mannered man, and ere he sat down, he placed his hides under the table. As he did so, he got one of her black looks from the woman, and thinks he, "Why not a lesson for you now, my woman?" With that he said to the woodman casually:

"To tell truth, I've been outside your hut this last half hour, under your penthouse, to be out of the rain, and there I found a chink in the wall"—the woman, who was fetching a platter, stopped suddenly and looked at him—"and I made so bold as to peep through, and what did ye think I saw? Why, I saw your good wife, sitting by the fire"—she gave him a look that mingled hate and pleading most intriguingly—"lonely like, all by herself—wasn't you, mis'ess?" She dropped heavily into her chair and let the platter bang on the table. "So thinks I," continued the tanner amiably, "I won't knock now, but wait till her good man returns." And presently, sure enough, home comes you, and up jumps she, all smiles, to let 'ee in—"

"Like the good wife she is," said Dickon fondly, patting his wife's shoulder.

"God's truth!" said the tanner. But that might have meant anything.

The woodman passed him the black bread. The tanner hacked himself off a lump, and as he did so, he set his foot on the hides under the table and gave them a push. The hides squeaked gently, plaintively, a little unmusical, whispering whimper. The tanner, leaning to one side, gave them a glance.

"Quiet there!" he said, not loudly, but in an authoritative manner, and turned to his supper.

The woodman saw and heard, but refrained from asking inquisitive questions.

Now, from this time forward, you must understand that every now and then the tanner squeezed the skins with his foot, and ever, when he did so, the hides would answer with a squeak, and the wily tanner would answer the skins, as it were, so that Dickon and Mawkin, his wife, were greatly puzzled.

"Come far?" asked the woodman.

Squeak. "Aye, a man has to travel to live"—squeak—"to live—"

Squeak. "Eh? What? No. As I was saying, I tan hides, and so buy me bread, and when I want new skins I go about afoot"—squeak—"afoot—" Squeak. "Eh? No." Squeak. "No, I tell 'ee! Afoot to pick 'em up cheap"—squeak—"and then home I go and tan them." Squeak. "No! Bide where you be!" Squeak. "Eh? Lies, all lies! And now I be going—"

Here the woodman could bear it no longer.

"Mate Tanner," he said, "who be you a-talking to?"

The tanner waved his hand at him violently, and put finger to lip.

"H-sh-sh-sh!" he whispered.

"But what is it?" persisted the woodman. He was a straightforward man, and liked things straightforward. Besides, look you, could a man be altogether comfortable with this—well, what was it?—under the table, near his very legs?

"'Tis nothing, I tell 'ee," the tanner assured him, but at that very instant came loudly, rapidly, insistently, "Squeak, squeak, squeak-ea-eak!"

It was too much for the woodman's wife.

"I don't like it!" she burst in. "There's something in his pack that squeaks!" She started up from the table.

"Mistress," said the tanner reassuringly, "'tis nothing. He never makes no more noise than this, and as long as I keep him wrapped up in the skins, tight—"

"Mercy on us!" said the woodman, starting up in his turn. "Is it something alive?"

The tanner struggled hard to calm their fears.

"It's nothing, it's nothing— Quiet there!" Squeak. "Does it disturb 'ee?"

"Mate," said the woodman earnestly, "what is it?"

Thus pressed, the tanner slowly and

reluctantly divulged his secret, though even now he would stave them off.

"If you must know," said he, "'tis my little familiar."

"A familiar!" said the woodman. "God's wounds, what's that?"

"'Tis a kind of little unsanctified thing," answered the tanner, thus pressed, "such as is common in the East, though I got this off a sailor in London, a queer, outlandish sort of thing—"

"Is it dangerous?" That was what Dickon wanted to know, and so would you, I venture.

"Not to good Christians."

"'Tis something unholy then! Is it—a devil?" asked the woodman's wife, with round eyes.

"Well, good wife, a sort of a devil. Yes, you might call it a devil, as it were." She made a sudden movement away from the table. "But never fear," he hastily assured her. "'Tis only a voice, a squeaking voice in the pack, till I choose to let him out—and you may go bail I'll not do that here!"

This was all very well, but, "God ha' mercy!" said Dickon solemnly. "A devil! Mate, you must be a bold man to carry a devil about with you! 'Tis a fearsome thing to do!"

"I don't like it!" said the woodman's wife. "I won't have it here! Take it outside! Gaffer, make him take it outside!"

"Nay, dame," expostulated the tanner, "'twill do no harm. Let it squeak, and do as I do. Take no notice of him."

"But I heard ye talking to it," said the woodman. "Is that squeaking noise the way it talks?"

"Aye."

"And what does it say?"

"Lies, lies, nothing but lies—at least—not always, but lately it hath done nothing but fool me," said the tanner, "with lying promises."

"Promises?"

"Aye. And now I take no notice." "And is it promising ye something now?"

"Aye," said the tanner contemptuously.

"But what? Here, Mawkin, hear this! Is it not wonderful? What does it promise ye?"

"Something I'm not fool enough to believe."

"As what?"

The tanner laughed.

"He promises me, if I'll only let him out for an hour, to show me a fine supper."

The woodman's wife opened her lips suddenly, just the tiniest opening.

"And could he?" persisted Dickon.

"Aye, he could—there's little he can't do. But rest you. This is but another of his lies. Sit down, woodman. Take no more notice of him, and let's have supper." He began to cut his black bread with great content.

The woodman could not, positively could not, let this mystery alone.

"But supposing 'tis true, mate. I'd love to see a bit o' magic of this sort. Oh, what a tale to tell to market this day next week! Try him."

"Not I," said the tanner.

"Listen, then," said the woodman. He leaned over and whispered in the tanner's ear. "Get the supper, anyhow!"

The tanner beamed in admiration.

"You've brains," he said, chuckling. "By Mary, that's good! Aye, we'll have the supper." He trod on the skins, and the faint squeak answered. "Listen, ye ungodly thing. D'ye hear me? Show us the supper, and maybe I'll let ye out afterward." Squeak, squeak-ea-ea-eak. "No, supper first." Squeak. "Then stop there. We've enough." Squeak, squeak-ea-ea-ea-eak. "Where?" Squeak. "The one in the wall?" Squeak. "He says there's a supper for three in the little cupboard over there."

The woodman leaped onto the chest

and threw open the door of the little cupboard. One glance; then, "Tanner! Wife! Mawkin! Mate!" he roared. "God bless us all, but the devil has told the truth! Look ye here! Did ye ever see the like of this?"

He began to clear the cupboard. No doubt of a devil having brought this supper, nor where it came from, for was not the pie all hot, hot from—ah—Never a doubt of it!

And, oh, could you have seen the face of the woodman's wife! When her husband's back was turned, she leaned over toward the tanner and made an expressive sign with her ten talons in the air toward his face. He regarded her smilingly and—I regret to admit it—he put the thumb of his left hand to his nose and spread his fingers. She almost leaped at him, and he added a second derision.

Nearly crying with rage, she set the white cloth on the table, and the pastry, and the wine and the white bread, and the platters—with many an exclamation of amazement and pleasure as she did so—and gleefully, gleefully sat the woodman down to supper. But not so gleefully as the tanner!

So those two feasted them royally, and the white loaf vanished, and the pastry faded away, and the leather bottle passed and repassed, though never a bite or sup would the woodman's wife touch, for very spite. And presently the woodman sat, very replete and very happy, and—from the wine—in a state of great bodily and spiritual exaltation.

"Mate Tanner," said he, "a blessing on thee and thy little devil! And now let's have him out!"

Now whether the tanner had foreseen this, or whether a new idea came to him, is not to be settled nowadays. I think it very likely that while he had sat and shivered in the penthouse and watched the monk within seated by the fireside, an envious resentment had

taken possession of him. Or it may have been the stirring of his mischievous spirit within him. At any rate, "Have him out!" he cried, as if aghast. "Have him out! Man, ye know not what ye ask!"

"But we've ate his supper," remonstrated Dick Woodman, a fair-dealing man, "and a good supper, too. Come, after all, we must play him fair, if 'tis only a devil."

"Well, have your own way, but 'tis no child's play when he gets loose," said the tanner nervously. "Have ye e'er a stick handy, and another for me—and one for your goodwife—for she'll not miss a chance like this."

She gave him a look—such a look! From somewhere in the room came a faint groan, and the woodman jumped. But they turned to the hearth where sticks for the fire lay heaped, and each chose a stout stick, and the woodman pressed a likely one into his wife's hand—whereat she thanked him sweetly—and then the tanner applied himself to the pack of hides again.

"Mark me, woodman," he said warningly, "there's no knowing how, when, or where this devil will appear. Sometimes he comes in the form of a marvelously fair woman; at others like a shape of dread ye can give never a name to; but mostly—"

"Mostly?" queried the woodman, a trifle nervous.

"Mostly in the guise of a fat monk." Again the faint groan. "Now mark me well! Get your stave tight in your fist and remember to shown no sign of fear, for that gives him power over mortal

man. As soon as he shows his ugly face, at 'him, woodman, and wallop him well! 'Tis a pleasant and Christian thing to do, to wallop the devil, and this night we'll do it."

He pressed the skins with his foot. Squeak, squeak, they went.

"When?" asked the tanner. "Now? And where?" Squeak. "Woodman, he says he's in the chest, and dares you to fetch him out!"

With that the woodman flinched a little, but, being a valiant man when all was said and done, he went over to the chest and lifted the lid. But on the instant the monk started up and leaped out, the woodman started back and fell over, the monk fell over him, the tanner fell on the top, and all three began to belabor one another, the woodman roaring at the top of his voice, the tanner bursting with laughter, the monk bellowing with pain and fear.

Mawkin, the woodman's wife, being near hysterics, was yet clever enough to slip the bolts of the door and fling it wide open, and this the monk perceiving, he scrambled up and, leaping across the table, vanished howling into the night, whither the woodman durst not follow him.

And then, like two stout Englishmen, having vanquished their enemy, they sat down at table again and finished the bottle. But the woodman's wife would not stay with them, but went up the ladder to bed in the loft, and the courteous tanner stood up from table and gave her his hand and wished her good night. But, oh, the look she gave him! And, oh, how the tanner laughed!





The Acid Test

by Adele Luehrman

Author of "A Problem in Arithmetic,"
"The Saving Sense," etc.

HE'S wonderful!"

Naomi Jackson frankly wiped tears from her eyes as she spoke; then dropped her handkerchief into her lap and enthusiastically added the noise of her clapping hands to the general applause, which became almost a tumult as the curtain rose again and Galbraith appeared to bow his acknowledgments.

"Don't you think he's wonderful, Miss Hyland?" Naomi questioned, as if feeling in her companion's passive silence a disagreement with the popular verdict.

"He knows his business," replied the older actress.

Her dry, grudging tone did not escape the girl. During the weeks in which she and Miss Hyland had been members of the same company, she had never known the latter to bestow generous praise on a fellow actor. According to her lights, she was just, however, and in granting Lawrence Galbraith a mastery of the technique of his art, she was granting him the one asset for which, in her opinion, any actor deserved credit. Galbraith's good looks, his resonant, expressive voice; his charm of manner—these were gifts of nature for which no praise was due him. Yet it was to them and not to his skill that he owed it all—this

crowded house, the tireless plaudits, the repeated curtain calls. To them, not to honest striving, had been due his early rise from the ranks where she still remained after all her years of dogged effort, doomed now to a dreary succession of colorless, unimportant rôles.

Something of her feeling, and of the disappointment and thwarted ambition that underlay it, Naomi vaguely sensed, and when the applause had at last ceased, and the orchestra began to play for the intermission, she instinctively veered to a different topic.

"What a lovely part! The girl's, I mean," she said. "Oh, Miss Hyland, do you think I shall ever get a chance to play a part like that?"

At the question, Miss Hyland looked around with a faint smile, the preface to some perfunctorily encouraging answer, but the sight of the young face, still flushed with the emotion the play had aroused, stopped the meaningless words. She had never seen the girl beside her look as she was looking now. In the small maid's part that she played nightly, she had appeared to be the usual pretty young thing, of the sort that arrives in fresh dozens each season on Broadway, hangs on for a few years, then drops away into marriage or some other profession. But now,

under the stress of feeling, a rare, unexpected quality was suddenly revealed in her, and after a silent stare of surprise, Miss Hyland turned her eyes away.

"Yes," she said quietly, "I think you will."

Something in her voice made Naomi wish she had not asked her question, though she could not have told why. Anyway, it was a silly question. How could any one tell her whether or not she was going to be a success on the stage? That was a matter for her own decision, and no one's else. Just now she felt confident enough—good acting always had this stimulating effect on her—and she sat silently indulging herself in the blissful thrill of it, while the dark, fascinating face of the actor she had just been watching fluttered before her still, like a face on a cinema screen.

"Have you seen Galbraith in many things?" asked Miss Hyland presently, and Naomi came back to reality with a little start.

"No," she replied. "I've seen him only once before, in a play called 'Summer.' That was six or seven years ago. I was only a kid. My aunt took me." She paused to laugh. "I lost my heart and head both, and next day I slipped off from school and went again to the matinée. I arrived late, just after the curtain had gone up, and the house was dark, so it wasn't till the lights went on again for the intermission that I saw who was sitting beside me. Who do you suppose it was? My aunt!"

Miss Hyland smiled dryly.

"Ah, yes, he's a charmer. That, of course, is what has made him," she said.

The conversation passed then to other subjects, and shortly afterward the curtain rose for the final act, and Naomi leaned forward, surrendering herself once more wholly to the spell of the

play until the lovely young leading woman was safely in the star's arms, where everybody had known she must at last land, and the matinée was over.

"Would you like to meet Larry?" Miss Hyland asked suddenly as they rose to leave the theater.

Naomi looked at her in surprise, struck chiefly by her casual use of the given name.

"Do you know him?" she exclaimed.

"My dear, I know everybody in the business—or ought to. I've been in it long enough," was the answer. "I've known Galbraith for years. In fact, I rose him his first engagement."

"Really? Think of his ever having to have an engagement got for him!" laughed Naomi. "Of course I want to meet him! I'd love it!"

"Then let's slip through here. I think there's a door to the stage behind the boxes," said Miss Hyland, who was apparently as well acquainted with theaters as with actors. "If we hurry, we'll catch him before he begins to dress. Otherwise, we shall have to wait."

The door behind the boxes materialized, but with her hand on the knob, Miss Hyland paused.

"I'm going to introduce you to Larry, my dear," she said, turning to look squarely at Naomi as she spoke, "but please remember that I don't take any responsibility for consequences."

"Consequences?" echoed Naomi in surprise. "What do you mean?"

The older woman gave a short laugh.

"Well, if there aren't any, it doesn't matter what I mean," she answered. "If there are, you'll know without my telling you. Only, don't blame me." And with this warning, she opened the door.

They found the star still on the stage, talking to a member of the company. At sight of his visitors, he came quickly toward them, greeted Miss Hyland with a warm handshake, and bowed with

gracious cordiality when she presented Naomi.

"Come to my dressing room, where we can sit down and talk," he said, leading the way.

The dressing room was in possession of a valet and a splendid bull terrier. The former, at the appearance of ladies, lingered only long enough to drop a curtain over the row of masculine garments dangling from hooks on the wall before he vanished. But the dog, with a joyous bark, sprang for his master.

"Oh, what a beautiful pup!" exclaimed Miss Hyland, with more genuine enthusiasm than Naomi had ever known her to show about anything, and the instant she was seated, she began to try her blandishments on the animal.

"What's his name? Max? Here, Maxie! Come to me, you beautiful thing! Come on—come on!" she coaxed. "Come along, Booflums!"

But Booflums did not come along. Sweet words meant nothing in his young life. He continued to leap persistently at his master, regardless of all discouragement.

"He seems to be as crazy about you as the women are, Larry," said Miss Hyland, finally giving up the struggle.

"He loves the hand that feeds him," answered Galbraith with a cynical shrug.

"And women don't, you mean?" she took him up instantly, with her short, dry laugh. "No, they don't—luckily for you."

Naomi caught the faint frown that flashed for a moment over the actor's expressive face.

"How do you like my new play?" he asked, ignoring the remark.

"Pretty well," said Miss Hyland. "It's evidently a go."

"Yes, thank Heaven!"

They fell then into a discussion of specific scenes, some of which, it appeared, were still in a fluid state. Listening, Naomi watched Galbraith

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closely, the fact that he seemed to have forgotten her presence making this possible without furtiveness. He was older than she had thought. Although his figure was still as slim and straight as that of a young man, there were white hairs among the black ones about his temples, and deep lines about his eyes and mouth, which the thick layer of juvenile flesh tint that he wore could not conceal from any but a distant glance.

Still, the dark, handsome eyes, the rich voice, the charm—these remained the same. And his air of being somebody—of being Galbraith, in short—lost nothing of its effect at close range.

Miss Hyland rose to go presently, and Naomi at once followed her example. As she did so, she moved her chair aside to give herself the opportunity she wanted to turn and look at a photograph in a silver frame standing on the dressing table. She had chanced to notice it on entering, but since that first moment, her back had been toward it. Now she saw that it was the picture of a girl, quite young and with a strikingly handsome face. She wondered who it could be.

Turning back at once to her companions, she saw that Miss Hyland's glance had followed her own, but the latter, with the privilege of old friendship, satisfied her curiosity openly by bending for a closer view.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, looking around at her host. "That's not Connie?"

He nodded.

"Grown up already? Why, when I saw her last, she was just a kiddie."

"Yes, it's appalling how they will do it," replied Galbraith, with a shrug. Then, as if he did not care to pursue the topic, he turned to Naomi. "You're playing in Miss Hyland's company, I believe?" he said.

"Yes," she answered.

"I shall give myself the pleasure of

coming to see you act. Your mid-week matinée is Thursday, I believe?"

"Yes," said Naomi. "But," she added with a laugh, "if you wink when I'm on the stage, you won't see me."

He smiled.

"Just starting, eh? How lucky you are to have your career all ahead of you!"

It was a charming way to put it, as Naomi appreciated, but before she had time to reply, Miss Hyland broke in with some item of news of an old acquaintance of hers and Galbraith's, and the latter did not again address Naomi except to bid her good-by rather formally when she and her companion presently took their leave.

"Well," ejaculated Miss Hyland when the stage door had closed upon them and they were again in the street, "I can't get over Connie! It doesn't seem any time at all since she was a little girl."

"Who is she, Miss Hyland?" asked Naomi.

"She's Connie Galbraith, Larry's daughter."

"Oh, I didn't know he was married. I've always understood that he was not," said Naomi.

"He isn't now—hasn't been for years."

"She's awfully pretty," said Naomi. "Is she going on the stage?"

"Not if her father can prevent it. The mere mention of it makes him see red."

"Does she travel with him?"

"Heavens no! She lives here with her mother."

"Oh, he's divorced!"

"Um," murmured Miss Hyland absently, as if her thoughts had suddenly wandered away.

A silence followed, during which Naomi tried to adjust herself to this new view of Galbraith. Despite her laughing account to Miss Hyland of her schoolgirl's enthusiasm about him,

she had never really lost it. Although she had not seen him again until now, she had followed his career with a sort of personal interest that she felt for no other actor. She had, she now realized, enveloped him in a glow of romance that had outlasted the years. Consequently it was something of a shock to find him in reality a middle-aged person with a daughter almost, if not quite, as old as herself, and a divorced man at that.

However, she was no longer a silly schoolgirl, and she could admire and respect him now for what he was, if not for what she had imagined him to be. He was a very attractive man, notwithstanding his grown daughter, and he knew how to act, even if he was divorced.

"His marriage was very unhappy," said Miss Hyland abruptly, her thoughts returning to the point of departure. "He was very young, and it played the devil with him, as it always does with a man of his temperament. Besides, women threw themselves at him. Of course his wife got the child. That hit Larry hardest of all; he was always mad about Connie. But I believe he's always been allowed to see her pretty often whenever he was in town, and now that she's grown up, I suppose she sees him whenever she wants to. She does, I'm sure, unless she's changed a lot, for she was certainly a willful little tike."

"She's very good looking, isn't she?"

Miss Hyland seemed not to hear. At any rate, she did not reply to the question. Instead, she laughed in her characteristic, dry manner and said:

"Larry didn't like my talking about her before you."

"Before me?" Naomi stared blankly. "Why not?"

"Because he was rather taken with you, and naturally he didn't want to be shown up as the father of a grown daughter."

Naomi laughed out, sincerely incredulous.

"How absurd, Miss Hyland!" she protested. "Why, he hardly noticed me."

The older woman smiled narrowly. "He saw you," she said.

At the corner, they separated, to meet again in a few hours for the evening performance at their own theater. Walking back to her boarding house, Naomi felt oddly excited. Of course there was nothing whatever in what Miss Hyland had said; it was too absurd, she told herself over and over. Still, the memory of it kept coming back, no matter into what more rational channel she tried to force her thoughts.

And at last she let them have their way. What if Miss Hyland were right? What would it mean? That was the question which had set her nerves to tingling. It might mean so very much. There was nothing, she knew, in Galbraith's own play that suited her, no young woman's part except the leading one, and she was not mad enough to hope to jump from her tiny rôle to anything like that. But he must know everybody of influence in his profession, all the managers and stars, and could easily help her to a good engagement for the coming season—if he were interested.

But was he? What could it have been that had made Miss Hyland think so? She herself had noticed nothing whatever. To be sure, he had said that he was coming to see her act, but that was what every one said to a person on the stage. It was a polite nothing. Still, he might come, not to see her, but the play, and if he thought her work showed promise—

But how could it show promise in such a part? She bobbed in and off with her few insignificant lines, always in the same black dress, until she felt like the automaton that she imagined she must appear.

Thus, hoping one instant and arguing against her hope the next, she spent a restless hour until dinner and the table talk of her fellow boarders distracted her from her futile occupation. At the theater that evening, Miss Hyland made no reference to their afternoon together, and after a night's sleep, Naomi awoke sufficiently normal to laugh at herself and mentally pigeon-hole her meeting with Lawrence Galbraith with other pleasant, but unimportant episodes. She would have been genuinely astonished, indeed, had she known that at the same hour Galbraith himself was reaching a different conclusion.

It was Thursday, and at the close of her afternoon performance, his card was brought her by an usher. On the back of it he had written a few words:

"You were charming. I know, because I was *very* careful not to wink."

Smiling at the reference to her remark to him, which must have amused him since he had not forgotten it, she examined his handwriting curiously, rather surprised to find it so small and precise. Then, suddenly, at the sound of steps outside her door which she recognized as Miss Hyland's, she slipped the card out of sight and called, "Come in!" promptly when a knock followed.

If her instinctive concealment of the card was to avoid the older woman's narrow, cynical smile, it proved to be wasted effort, for the smile was there in spite of it.

"Mr. Lawrence Galbraith requests the honor of our company at dinner this evening," announced Miss Hyland, with mocking formality. "Will you go?"

Naomi looked at her and hesitated for a moment, irritated by the frank "I told you so" of both glance and tone. Then, realizing that to decline Galbraith's invitation because of the manner in which his messenger had chosen

to deliver it would be stupid, she ignored everything but the words themselves.

"I shall be delighted," she answered quietly. "If you're going, too."

"Oh, yes, I'm going. Larry always feeds one so well," said Miss Hyland with her dry laugh. "That's compensation enough for me. But don't forget," she turned back at the door to add, "what I said about consequences." And without waiting for a reply, she was gone.

Naomi frowned to herself as she began to dress. How horrid old people were, she thought. She quite forgot that Galbraith was not young.

The fact came back to her with a slight shock when they met for dinner a couple of hours later. She had not, she found, fully discounted his make-up. Bereft of the becoming bronze complexion that he affected on the stage, he appeared to her at first glance quite pale and worn. However, this impression was only temporary. Again, as at their previous meeting, his eyes and voice and manner quickly asserted their charm, and she willingly yielded to it.

Not that he seemed in the least to try to charm her. He did not, it was true, quite forget her existence, as he had appeared to do on the previous afternoon, but his attention was given chiefly to his other guest. For the conversation kept drifting back to experiences that the two had shared or to the careers of their friends, the very names of whom were strange to Naomi. This was clearly Miss Hyland's fault, but Naomi did not mind. She was so new to New York's theatrical life that she found it well worth while to sit and listen to two such authorities as her companions were.

They had, of course, to leave early for their evening's work, at just the hour when the rest of the world was beginning to dine, and they made their

way out of the restaurant against an incoming stream of patrons. Miss Hyland was ahead, and it chanced presently that Naomi and Galbraith became separated from her by a pair of new arrivals who stopped in their path and blocked it for a minute.

"I'm afraid you were bored with our reminiscences," said Galbraith, taking immediate advantage of his opportunity, "but you know how it is when old friends meet." Then, before she could reply, he added: "Won't you give me a chance to make amends by dining with me alone some evening?"

"Why—I should be delighted," faltered Naomi, embarrassed by the repetitious aspect of the invitation.

"Are you free Sunday?" he came back instantly. "We could dine at a decent hour then and take our time."

"Why—yes."

"Ah, I'm so glad! Where shall I call for you?"

She gave him her address, and he repeated it after her as if to impress it on his memory.

"At seven-thirty?" he asked.

She nodded. There was no time to do more, for the people who were obstructing their way at that moment removed themselves, and she saw that Miss Hyland had turned and was waiting. And something in the latter's sharp glance as they rejoined her made Naomi flush guiltily.

Yet why should she feel guilty, she demanded of herself the next moment, annoyed by the betrayal of her burning cheeks. There was no reason why she should not have accepted Galbraith's invitation to dine, no reason why he should not have asked her. It was only her consciousness of the horrid things Miss Hyland was thinking that made her uncomfortable.

Whatever Miss Hyland thought, however, she made no comment afterward when they were alone, except to extol the viands they had enjoyed. But

in her very reticence Naomi read a tacit washing of her hands of the whole affair. "I've warned you, so don't blame me," her silence seemed to repeat.

The restaurant which Galbraith suggested as his choice on Sunday night he referred to as a "quiet little French place," but it turned out to be entirely different from any other "little French place" that Naomi had ever seen in New York. At all of those, she had been served with a messy table d'hôte that began with coldslaw and ended with coffee in an unbreakable demi-tasse, the whole interspersed with "red ink" and rancid butter.

From all such horrors Villemain's was immeasurably removed. It was, to begin with, in the most fashionable residential section of the city, hidden away in the basement of one of the most expensive apartment houses of that highly expensive locality. Its entrance looked like the usual delivery door of such buildings, and the small sign at one side of it was so deliberately unnoticeable that you would certainly have failed to see it if you had not been looking for it, and you would hardly have been looking for it unless you happened to be a friend of a friend, so to speak. But the instant you descended the short flight of narrow steps to the foyer and took one look at the low-studded room beyond, you knew, without the aid of the right-hand columns of the menu, that you were in that blessed land where only the best is good enough.

"How perfectly charming!" exclaimed Naomi, in an involuntary burst of delight. "And so simple!"

Galbraith smiled, gratified by her pleasure and quick appreciation and glad to be justified in his estimate of her.

"Yes, I like it here," he said. "I find it restful—after Broadway."

She smiled understandingly, con-

scious of a new bond of sympathy between them, for she, too, found the loud luxury of Broadway restaurants distasteful.

"A cocktail?"

"No, thank you, nothing at all to drink."

He nodded, courteously acquiescent. "I never take anything," she added.

The minute she had spoken, she was sorry. The worst of it was that she had slightly emphasized the "never," as if to assure him that she had not refused because of him, and of course the very fact of her seeming to think the assurance necessary made it appear that it was because of him, because she did not trust him. What in the world could have made her say such a stupid thing?

When the dinner had been ordered, their talk started on the usual round of impersonal topics, but when the main course had been served and the waiter had gone away to leave them in peace for a time, Galbraith said, in his easy, charming way:

"Now suppose we try to get acquainted, shall we? Tell me about yourself—about your work, I mean, of course. What have you done?"

She gave him briefly the history of her few seasons on the stage, spent chiefly in traveling companies.

"I saw that I wasn't getting ahead," she said then, "so last year I saved every penny that I could and this season I've stayed here in New York, determined to take nothing except a Broadway engagement. The waiting was terrible, and all I got in the end was the tiny part I'm playing now. But I was very glad to get that." She hesitated for a moment, her big blue eyes on his black ones. "I don't know what you really thought about my work the other day," she said earnestly, "but I'm sure that I can do better parts."

He nodded emphatically.

"You can—and will," he answered. "You have health and beauty and in-

telligence. They're God's gifts. The rest is up to you—entirely."

"Thank you," she murmured gratefully.

"How would you like to play with me next season?"

"With you?" She looked at him in surprise. "Why, there isn't anything in your play for me—is there?"

There was a pause. No one knew the value of a pause better than Lawrence Galbraith.

"My leading woman is leaving me when we close for the summer," he said then. "She's to be married."

Naomi drew a long breath, but she did not speak. She merely looked at him and waited, her heart beating wildly.

"Of course," he went on, his eyes intent upon her face, "you have hardly had experience enough as yet to know how to handle a big leading rôle, but I believe that you could do it with careful coaching, such as I would give you."

He stopped then, as if expecting a reply.

"I—I don't know what to say," she faltered, tears of excitement starting to her eyes. "You—you can't mean it!"

"I do mean it," he answered quietly. "But of course everything would depend on how well you—realized my expectations."

"Of course."

He studied her face for a moment with a look in his eyes that puzzled her.

"Are you really ambitious?" he questioned presently. "Do you want a real career, or are you only on the stage to amuse yourself until the right man comes along? That's what I want to know—what I must know." He smiled. "You see, it's like this, little girl. It would be a simple matter for me to replace my leading woman with an actress of equal experience and reputation. There are several women whom I could name that would be glad to have the engagement."

"Of course," murmured Naomi.

"And it would hardly repay me for the time and pains I should have to spend on you if I were to have the benefit of it for only one season, or two—I mean if there was a possibility of your leaving at the end of that time. Do you understand?"

"Yes; but if I had a long contract with you—"

"Ah, that's just the point," he interrupted. "I don't want some one whose interests are bound to mine merely by a legal document. I can get plenty of that sort. I want some one who will work as whole-heartedly for my career as I shall work for hers, some one I shall rejoice to see rise to fame beside me, because we shall be bound to one another by a closer—a—a more—human tie, let me say."

He paused and waited again while his intent gaze searched her face. She said nothing. She did not know what to reply, not having grasped his full meaning.

"For years," he continued, "I've dreamed of such an ideal companionship, because I know what an inspiration it can be to those who share it. For years I've gone on looking for the woman who could give it to me. I've never found her—until now. Perhaps I haven't found her now." He gave a little deprecating shrug; then, leaning toward her, he went on in a lower tone, so low that, but for his perfect enunciation, she could hardly have heard him:

"When I saw you for the first time, I was like a prospector who has been seeking gold for years in vain and suddenly, when he's decided to give up his quest, finds it. Oh, you don't know how I want to get at your mind and your heart and dig out their gold! I want to make your lovely face and voice the wonderful instruments of expression that they should be. You have

beauty, intelligence, and sensibility. I want to teach you to use them—fully."

As he stopped, Naomi's eyes wavered a moment before his ardent ones; then she looked down into her plate. She felt ill at ease, embarrassed, yet elated at the same time. The future pictured for her was in itself intoxicating.

"I—I don't know—what to say—" she began stammeringly.

"Don't say anything," he answered. "Don't even think of what I've said, for a while. I've dropped a little seed into your mind, a new idea. We'll let it look out for itself. If it's any good, it will. And now let's be practical." He laughed. "We haven't been. We've let our dinner get cold—which reminds me of an amusing experience that I once had."

The experience turned out to be commonplace enough, but it served its purpose of putting her again at her ease and also led to other and more interesting reminiscences. When he left her at her door an hour later, she could almost have believed from his manner that she had fallen asleep during the roast course and had a silly dream.

But she did not forget what he had said, and, despite his advice, she churned his words over and over in her mind, trying to arrive at their meaning. Was he going to give her a chance at that wonderful part in his play or not? Was that contingent on the other? And what was the other? Did he want her to marry him? Or what?

Galbraith proved himself a good gardener. He betrayed no desire whatever to dig up the seed he had planted to see if it was growing. Indeed, Naomi began to wonder if he had acted on impulse in speaking of the part to her and had later regretted it. For two weeks, he did not again refer to the matter, though she saw him frequently. She dined with him, lunched occasionally, went to tea and for walks in the

park. That he was strongly attracted there could be no doubt, but what his intentions were she could not decide.

Her uncertainty, especially about the part, kept the whole affair constantly uppermost in her mind, as he had perhaps meant that it should. She became anxious, even, and restless with suspense. Twice, unknown to him, she went to his Wednesday-afternoon performance to feed her hopes by watching the leading woman's rôle, following every line, every bit of action in it. And afterward, in her room alone, she rehearsed over and over the speeches that she remembered, whole scenes, in fact, for, with her avid interest, her mind seized and held almost every word.

Meanwhile, her respect and admiration for Galbraith mounted steadily—for Galbraith the actor, the artist, that is. He gave her, in long, fascinating talks, an insight into the mysteries of their art of acting. He explained what he called the psychology of the audience, why its response to certain merely mechanical "tricks" could be calculated with almost mathematical precision. He talked about the voice, its varied "emotional colors," and about the "nuances of gesture." And again and again he quoted Carlyle's famous saying that it is little things that make perfection, but that perfection is not a little thing.

And Naomi listened absorbed, intrigued, the pupil at the master's feet.

For Galbraith the man, however, she hardly knew what she felt or thought. It was as if the man in him were keeping out of sight. Now and again she seemed to catch a glimpse of something hidden, and the experience always gave her an unpleasant sensation. It was as if he were lurking, waiting his chance to take her unawares. She ridiculed the feeling as absurd, but it persisted.

Would she marry Galbraith if he asked her? That question she put to

herself very squarely. She was not in love with him; she knew that. But she was in love with no one else, and he was a distinguished man whose wife she would be proud to be. Moreover, he could help her to a career such as she wanted, make her famous. It would be a great temptation.

But was it marriage that he was thinking of? If it was not, she wanted to know it, so that she could end the suspense of her position. And it was not alone this feeling of uncertainty that troubled her; it was the fear of gossip. She was sure that already she was the subject of whispered speculations in her own company. One of the men had chanced to see her on two occasions dining with Galbraith and must have spread the news, for she was conscious of curious glances from some of her associates who had before appeared unaware of her existence.

What they were all thinking she could guess easily enough, but she thought it would be stupid to let it influence her actions. They might be quite wrong. If only she could know! If only she could put Galbraith to some test that would clear up the situation, so that she could either end it or continue with an easy mind! She tried to think of a test, but those that occurred to her were impossibly obvious.

Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, chance entered the game—and ended it.

It was on a Sunday in May. The afternoon was bright and deceptively warm, and Galbraith telephoned to suggest that they motor into the country and have their dinner at a "jolly little place" down on Long Island. Naomi agreed.

The run down in the sunshine was delightful, but the sun set early and the air grew rapidly colder. Galbraith seemed not to notice the change, possibly because he was very warmly dressed, but Naomi was uncomfortably aware of it, and by the time they had

reached McNally's Farm, where they were to dine, she was thoroughly chilled, so much so, indeed, that when the overheated air of the house first struck her, she began to shiver uncontrollably.

"You must have something to drink at once," said Galbraith quickly. He turned to the proprietor, who had met them in the hall. "I phoned—Galbraith," he explained briefly.

The proprietor consulted a card, then beckoned a waiter.

"Number three," he said.

The waiter nodded and led the way up a flight of stairs and on to a small room in which there was only one table. Naomi stopped on the threshold in surprise, but before she could speak, Galbraith said rapidly in a low tone:

"I'm always recognized in a place like this, and people stare the whole evening. Beastly unpleasant! Please go in."

She entered. She felt that under the circumstances it would be childish to protest, much as she would have preferred the common dining room below.

Galbraith took her coat and furs from her and hung them on a tree that stood in a corner of the room, the waiter having been dispatched for hot drinks. When he returned presently, Naomi made no objection to drinking the whisky and water mixed for her. Her fear of pneumonia, which she had once had after just such a chilled condition, was stronger than any other feeling. She must not get sick, whatever happened, she told herself, for she had no home now and no one to take care of her.

"Getting warmer?" asked Galbraith, when the waiter had again departed for food. "Why didn't you tell me you were cold? I would have given you my coat."

"I don't think I knew myself how cold I was," she answered. "But I'm all right now. Only I'm afraid that

drink is going to my head." She laughed. "I'll be telling you the story of my life presently."

"All right. Go ahead," he invited, smiling.

She laughed again. She did not really think that the whisky had affected her, because she had had no personal experience with the effects of alcohol. She innocently imagined that, as long as she knew what she was saying, she was entirely sober, and that the wonderful, warm glow that she felt all through her was due to the reaction from her chill. She was quite unconscious of the dulling of her sensibilities, and that otherwise she would have been keenly aware of the waiter's discreet tap and of the pause that followed before he entered, or of the fact that, instead of sitting opposite her, Galbraith was at one side.

For the same reason, she could never afterward recall the gradations by which the conversation progressed, or guess to what extent she herself helped its advance. His last speech was the only one that she remembered distinctly and that, she thought, must have been because he touched her as he spoke. It was his touch that brought her to her senses.

"You're asleep, Naomi," he said. "Your eyes are open, but you're fast asleep. You're talking to me, smiling at me, as if you could see me, but you can't, because you're asleep. I'm going to wake you up, do you hear? I'm going to kiss you, like the prince in the fairy tale. I'm going to teach you what love means—"

His hand was over hers as it lay on the table, and his face was close to her face, quite close. She remembered how its nearness made her feel, how she wanted to get away from it and could not because he was holding her hand. Then, suddenly, from just beyond the wall behind her, she heard a woman laughing, and instantly, as if

startled, Galbraith drew back and listened. And when the laugh came again, he stood up, his face white. Then he turned and walked out of the room.

As he opened the door, the voice that had laughed called out loudly:

"Oh, waiter, don't forget the cherry in mine!"

Galbraith closed the door behind him with a sharp bang which followed so closely on the words that it seemed to Naomi to have been occasioned by them. She heard his steps, then his opening of the next door without a knock, the closing of the door again, and after that a quick medley of voices. She listened, but could make out nothing that was said. Galbraith and the woman seemed to be talking rapidly back and forth, and several times she could make out a third voice, a man's.

Puzzled and ill at ease, she stood up. What was the matter, she wondered. It must be something extraordinary to have caused her host to leave her as he had without a word of explanation or apology.

Suddenly a knock came at her door, and after the usual pause, the waiter entered, bringing the salad. He looked at her with an expression of mild surprise, then stopped.

"Shall I serve the salad now, madame?" he inquired after a moment's hesitation.

"Why, I—suppose so," she faltered, not knowing what else to say.

The door of the next room opened abruptly and Galbraith appeared at the door. His face was flushed, his eyes angry.

"Bring the check," he said when he saw the waiter. "And have my car brought around—right away."

"Yes, sir." The man hesitated. "Shall I serve the salad first, sir?" he asked.

"No!" Galbraith snapped. "We've finished!"

"Yes, sir," said the waiter and hurried off.

Galbraith came into the room then, followed by a tall, handsome girl in a long coat, her hands buried in the pockets. She gave Naomi a hard, curious stare from her black eyes as she entered.

"Miss Jackson, this is my daughter," said Galbraith. "I'm very sorry, but it's necessary for me to return to the city at once."

He stepped over to the rack on which their coats hung and took hers from it, and she moved around to meet him, pausing only for a silent nod at his companion, though his curt announcement seemed little enough like an introduction.

Connie Galbraith nodded back with a sullen frown between her thick black brows. She was very like her photograph, and like her father, Naomi thought, as she cast about for something to say. She could, however, think of nothing that appeared suitable, at sea as she was as to the exact nature of the situation. In silence, she slipped into the coat her host held for her and waited while he silently put on his own and then led the way downstairs. There he paid his check and they presently departed, the daughter sitting with the chauffeur.

"Very sorry. Explain later," said Galbraith in a low tone to Naomi, when the gay lights of McNally's had disappeared at a turn in the road.

After that there was silence again. Naomi felt queer and uncomfortable, but it was evident that her companion did not wish to talk. He sat frowning at the back of his daughter's head, his lips pressed together. What was the matter, she wondered. Was he angry at finding his daughter dining alone with a man in a private room, or was it the man he objected to? Whoever the latter was, he seemed to have been eliminated without difficulty, for Naomi

had not had so much as a glimpse of him.

It was even colder than it had been before, but Galbraith had apparently forgotten that his guest was too lightly clad. And she did not, in fact, suffer as she had before dining. The food and drink were a partial defense against the chilling atmosphere.

The machine stopped at last before an apartment house on upper Riverside Drive. Connie sprang out instantly and with a curt "Good night" made for the entrance. Galbraith turned to Naomi as he opened the door beside him.

"Do you mind waiting for a few minutes?" he asked. "I want to speak to Mrs. Galbraith, and if I take you away downtown first, I'm afraid I shall get back too late to see her to-night. Do you mind?"

"No, not at all," said Naomi politely, but with a little shiver of repugnance. Mrs. Galbraith!

He disappeared into the house, leaving her to her unpleasant speculations, but these were cut short after barely a minute by the sudden return of Connie.

She dashed across the sidewalk with long-legged, coltish strides, leaving the door of the apartment house open behind her, but she had hardly reached the car when the figure of a man in livery appeared in the doorway. She turned, gave a little wave of her hand at him, then looked around at Naomi with a funny grimace.

"Dad left me in charge of the elevator man while he went upstairs. He didn't want me to hear what he said to mother," she explained with astonishing candor. Now that her face was cleared of its frown, she appeared younger than when Naomi had first seen her, and was probably not over twenty.

"He's up there now taking the poor

thing's head off for letting me go to McNally's. As if she knew what sort of a place it is!" She stopped short with a little embarrassed laugh, brought to a sense of what she had said by Naomi's startled expression. "Oh, I beg your pardon!" she said quickly. "But of course it was all right for you to go there. You're on the stage, aren't you? And nobody ever expects an actress to—" She cut herself off again for a moment. "Why—what I mean," she stammered on hurriedly, "is that dad shouldn't take it out on mother because I went there. I always do what I like. Anyhow, I guess McNally's is *really* all right. It's just what people say about it, you know, and—and— Oh, I didn't come out to talk about that, anyhow," she suddenly exclaimed in desperate embarrassment. "I just came out to tell you that I'm sorry about butting in on your

dinner. I noticed that the waiter was just bringing the salad."

Naomi forced a smile to her lips. That the girl's revelation about McNally's had been quite inadvertent she could not doubt. Her confusion was too genuine.

"I'm not sorry," she answered. "I'm very glad that—that you did butt in."

Connie Galbraith gave her a quick, puzzled glance.

"Oh!" she exclaimed then in a tone of sudden comprehension. "You mean that it was a blessed relief? That you were bored? Oh, gee! What a joke on dad!" She laughed out with impish glee. "But don't worry. I won't give you away," she added. "I'll never tell him. Only, it's a good joke on him, isn't it?"

Naomi nodded.

"Yes, perhaps it is—rather," she agreed.

The May Ainslee's will contain another "Naomi Jackson" story,
"A Question of Orchids."



IN THE WAKE OF WAR

WE read how close in the red wake of War—
The grim conquistador
That we thought banished from the ways of earth—
The flowers follow,
And mantle hill and hollow,
While the swallow
In soaring spirals cleaves the upper air,
And there
Spills from song's chalice its soft notes of mirth.

We know that all this loveliness should be—
Beauty in every shining entity;
But ere the world be free
To worship it, and cry with God, "All's well!"
First must the ravening Beast be made to flee,
First must be flayed the banded hosts of Hell!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



“Her Feet Beneath Her Petticoat”—

By F. E. Bailey

1.—The Good Ally

LAURELTINE slowly uncrossed her legs. She had the most beautiful legs, soon, alas, to disappear forever, because she was nearly sixteen. At present, rose-silk stockings enshrined them, matching to a semitone the rose-silk tie at the opening of her white drill frock, a rose-silk slouch hat, and the hair ribbon that restrained her ripe-corn plait. Laureltine's youthful countenance, filched by the good genii at her birth from the most forlornly beautiful magazine cover of that historic year, expressed resolution tinged with faint regret. Her violet eyes overmatched in mystery the river that flowed past into eternity.

“If manners still make the man, you are doomed to an everlasting childhood, my dear Charles,” she said slowly. “You'll drivel from your first into your second without the ordinary lucid interval. Personally it won't affect me, because you've ceased to interest me. I detest rude boys. Good evening!”

She got up and began to move slowly down the river bank toward a moored punt. Mr. Charles Devenish, who would never see seventeen again, staggered slightly under the onslaught and, recovering, proceeded to match his pace with hers.

“Hang it, Laureltine!” he began, willing to justify himself. “I can stand a good deal, but a man's at least got a right to a mind of his own! I think you might be a bit decent, especially as Heaven knows what I'm supposed

to have done. I shall be in the O. T. C. very soon, and then you won't see me at all. It isn't very sporting of you, is it? Laureltine—”

He laid a detaining hand on her arm. Two jewels of violet ice, that once were Laureltine's eyes, froze his very soul.

“How dare you touch me? You've been perfectly impossible all the evening! I'm extremely sorry for the O. T. C., but I can't help thinking of myself a little. It will be a great relief when you've gone.”

She moved away with the calm detachment of omnipotence and stepped into the punt. She withdrew the mooring pin; a stroke of the paddle, and the punt had swung out into midstream. Mr. Devenish stood petrified in his tracks. Most girls rather admired him.

Laureltine paddled slowly upstream, thrilled by the beauty of a summer evening. With customary female callousness she had completely forgotten Charles. It is the privilege of the Laureltines of this life to forget the Charleses; there are so many Charleses, so few Laureltines. Wounded with beauty in the summer night, she took little notice of her direction, with the consequence that her punt grounded on a spit of land running out from the river bank. Immediately between her and the true bank grew a clump of willows; on the other side of it stood a bungalow, the occupants of which, taking the evening air, conversed in the twilight.

"Fool!" murmured Laureltine, apropos of herself, adding, apropos of the half-hidden strangers: "It's the nice major and his wife."

Scraps of conversation fell on her ears.

"I wonder why you hate me so much?" inquired a man's voice, presumably the nice major's, with some bitterness. "It seems rather a futile thing to say, but one does what one can. I think you might try and pretend to be a bit decent. I've been through it pretty well overseas, and I shan't be at home forever. I've not annoyed you deliberately so far as I know, and if I have, tell me what it is, and I won't do it again. We used to be rather pals once, Marcia."

Laureltine strained her ears for the reply, knowing quite well she had no business to listen.

"I don't suppose you do know," retorted the voice of Marcia, and there was no warmth in it, "and certainly I can't tell you. P'r'aps we've grown out of one another. People do, you know. You've been away so long, and I got to be able to do without you. Of course I looked forward to your coming back, and p'r'aps I looked forward too much, for it was rather an anticlimax. You've altered a good bit. You're quiet and silent, and you won't do anything jolly. We just came down to this hutch, and here we've been sitting in each other's pockets ever since. I met some rather decent men while you were away. It sounds beastly, but I can't help it—frankly, I'm getting bored."

Laureltine's better self prevailed. She made her way through the willows and came upon the strangers. It was indeed the nice major and his wife—very cold, very charming, very pretty, in a delightful evening gown. Laureltine stood before them, demure and appealing.

"I'm so sorry to bother," she began,

glancing at both and concentrating on the major. "I'm stuck on the shoal and I can't move my punt. If you could give me a shove off, I should be awfully grateful."

"What rotten luck!" said Marcia, as to a very small child.

The nice major adopted a different attitude.

"Of course I will. Delighted!" he replied courteously. "These shallows are the very dickens with a punt. I got stuck myself the other day."

"Thanks most awfully," murmured Laureltine.

She wished good night very prettily to her hostess, and departed with the major. They said nothing. Laureltine felt a pig to have heard. Her companion seemed lost in thought.

He handed her into the punt and hesitated. Laureltine made no sign. The opening must come from him if at all. He gave himself a little, imperceptible shake.

"You must have heard," he said at last. "I don't know why I tell you. You're a girl, though, and p'r'aps you understand. What shall I do? I feel as if the world had ended. I s'pose it's all my fault!"

Laureltine looked up, and her violet eyes brooded over him like a mother's. She thought him rather a dear.

"I don't s'pose you meant to do it. P'r'aps she's difficult. Women are, you know, though they don't always mean to be. I don't know what to tell you. I'd like to think. Could you come to tea to-morrow, and talk things over? If you'd like to, that is. Our bungalow is Sans Souci, just round the bend. Mother won't be back till dinner time—she's going to town—but it'll be quite all right because I may always make my own friends, and you can stay and meet her if you want to. Will you come? I should like it very much."

"Thank you," said the nice major simply. "Good night!"

He shoved off Laureltine's punt and stood watching her. She waved once as she doubled the bend, and he waved back. There was a touch of cynicism in Marcia's eyes when he returned.

Laureltine regarded her mother thoughtfully when she said good night.

"Somehow I can't imagine your being fed up if father came home on leave," she remarked irrelevantly.

"No, but then father and I are rather good pals—better than most people," explained Laureltine's mother.

"I expect that's it," assented Laureltine.

II.

The nice major rose up from Laureltine's tea table, a long, lean man, and smiled with the not inconsiderable charm of the faithful, doggy kind.

"I'll be getting back if I may," he suggested. "My wife's alone. Thank you for my good tea. It's nice of you to have me."

Laureltine smiled back on him benignly. She had exerted herself to be very charming. Not a word concerning the occurrence of the night before had passed between them. To begin with, the major had seemed to await he knew not what, with bated breath. Latterly he had sunned himself contentedly in the light of Laureltine's countenance and let things go at that. She, for her part, petted him and permitted herself a little mild flirtation, but he was so faithful and doggy she almost feared to corrupt him.

She rose slowly and reached for the silken slouch hat.

"As you walked, I'll paddle you back in the punt," she announced.

They drifted slowly downstream to the clump of willows. Laureltine's brains worked swiftly. She had set her hand to a task as yet unfulfilled—the task of helping a friend. As they stepped ashore, the sight of Marcia in the distance brought inspiration. The

major had his back to his wife, unaware of her proximity.

Laureltine stood before him exercising all the influence of her youth and charm. She smiled straight into his eyes and waited. As a wave of emotions broke over his astonished face, she raised her chin perhaps an inch and her lips just parted, very nearly asking to be kissed.

"Good night!" she almost whispered.

The nice major, clearly in an agony of self-reproach, fell.

Laureltine, conscious that Marcia had seen and turned away, regained her punt. As she paddled home, she rubbed her mouth with the daintiest of hankies.

III.

DEAR MISS SHAW: I wonder if you would care to come and have tea with me? I should like to meet you again so much. Could you come this afternoon? Yours sincerely,

MARcia HILLIARD.

Laureltine twisted the little violet-scented note thoughtfully.

"She's clever. It's the sort of thing I'd do myself. Well, I'm not going to run away," she murmured, and at four o'clock the punt grated once more upon the pebbles by the willow clump.

Marcia was alone. She made a charming hostess. Laureltine admired her grudgingly, and her strawberries and cream did not taste so bitter after all. Beginning with blouses, they steered the conversation gradually around to men.

"I've got to thank you for something," Marcia said slowly at last. "Whether you meant to or not—and now that I know you I think you did—you made me realize I still love my husband."

Laureltine's one cross happened to be a trick of blushing occasionally when she wanted to least. Now, while posing as a woman of the world, this frightful affliction dyed her cheeks and

throat a flaming scarlet. Bringing into play a will of iron, she carried on, apparently unconscious of this chromatic peculiarity.

"He's an awfully good sort," she observed in a little cool, detached tone. "I couldn't help overhearing what you said that evening, and I was sorry. I expect you were, too, afterward. One does say these things now and then. As a matter of fact, that very evening I'd been an awful pig to a very decent boy. I knew, if your husband kissed me, he'd realize how little any one counted beside you. Men do, don't they? A kiss is a sort of touchstone of love, for a man, just as much when he kisses the wrong girl as the right. I rather respect you for asking me to tea, though."

"You needn't, really. It was intended originally as a reconnoitering expedition. I expected a pirate, and

now I've met—may I say a pal? I rather envy you, Laureltine. You've got an awfully good time in front of you."

Laureltine rose to take farewell.

"It's been frightfully jolly," she said contentedly. "Do come and see mother and me. We're all alone, now father's in France."

That evening, in the seclusion of her bedroom, Laureltine put on her prettiest nighty and, propped among her pillows, wrote a little pink note:

DEAR CHARLES: On second thoughts, you may have seemed more disagreeable than you intended. If you will promise to be very good, you may take me to tea at the Deodars before you join the O. T. C.

"The Deodars" was a name given by the proprietors to a certain secluded house boat, a temple of flirtation, where tea and the iciest pink ices were to be obtained.



REMEMBRANCE

DEAR, sometimes when the spring is newly come,
And sunlight, like a luminous veil, is falling
Down the long vistas of the years, recalling
Old hopes and dreams and tears—then from
My heart, the while my lips are dumb,
I yield you, dear, the tribute that is due
To our old love and all my pride in you.
Or when the bees in flaming autumn hum,
Lost in the purple asters' heart of gold,
Ah, friend that loved me once so long before,
Do you feel, as the red sun sinks from sight,
Strange longing for a dream we lost of old?
Oh, had we only cared a little more,
Who have not even yet forgotten quite!

ELINOR CHIPP.



Orchids and Dandelions

By Lucy Stone Terrill

IT was an unparalleled incident in the Hartley family when Daveen and her mother suddenly went West for a month to some indefinite place called Wyoming, just when Daveen, by all the laws of their universe, should have been employing her every second stepping from one new gown into another, preparatory to marrying Jim Godfrey.

But it came about very simply. On the night of the day when Daveen told Frank Worthington that she was to marry his friend Jim Godfrey, she felt a desire to talk to her mother. It was the first time she had ever known a longing for the sympathy of her cold, quiet mother, but urged on by the impulse in her heart, she went to her mother's room. Mrs. Hartley was propped up among pillows, reading.

"Mary goes to bed to read—not to sleep," Daveen's father often said.

Mrs. Hartley had always just a little awed her three daughters; she was a haughty woman—not unkindly so, but quietly disdainful of bubbling enthusiasms and quick-sprung sympathies. Daveen, perhaps, felt closer to her than did Jane or Betty, because she was the baby—the last to leave the nursery—and she had been so entirely a little personage of her own, looking strangely unlike any of the family portraits.

"I hope you'll have a *mind* of your own, like your name and your face," she always remembered that her mother had said to her on the day she had left for college. She alone of the three girls had gone to college. Jane and Betty had been extensively "finished." It was one of the few things she had heard her mother say that remained in her memory. Mrs. Hartley generally said the usual thing, did the usual thing, advised the usual thing, and supposedly thought the usual thing. And a mind of one's own was distinctly an unusual thing for a girl in Daveen's circle to possess.

Once, when she had been a tiny thing, Daveen had eluded her nurse and stolen a glimpse of her mother gowned for a great ball on the anniversary of her wedding.

"Oh, mother!" she had cried. "You look just like a china lady! Oh, so pretty!"

And afterward she had heard the nurse and the governess murmuring about it.

"It was no less than uncanny," old Martha declared, "for she's got just about as much heart in her as that blue cream pitcher."

Daveen thought of this as she stood hesitating in her mother's doorway.

"I—I just thought I'd run in a min-

ute," she answered lamely to her mother's quiet look of inquiry. "I'm sort of fagged to-night, somehow." Obeying her mother's gesture, she sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Was Jim neglectful to-day?" asked Mrs. Hartley, smiling.

"Oh, no—orchids. I wish he'd change to a—a bunch of sunflowers or some dandelions."

"Suggest it, my dear," her mother advised promptly.

"Oh, hell!" said Daveen, at which her mother sat up in undisguised amazement.

"My dear! Whatever is the matter with you?"

Daveen stared at her mother almost stupidly, realizing with a suddenness that somehow numbed her senses that the comfort she craved did not live in her mother's heart; she had never needed it before, so she had not discovered her loss.

"What is it, Daveen?"

"I don't quite know, mother. Something about you sort of—of surprised me."

"Well, that is extraordinary," commented her mother dryly. "Are you bothered in any way about Jim?"

"Y-es. I'm wondering if—if I should love him if he were poor—as poor as Frank Worthington, for instance."

"O-oh. Well, I can tell you that you probably would not."

"Mother!" Daveen looked aghast at the blunt statement. "Don't you think it's possible to be happy without riches?"

She colored a little at hearing the trap her tongue had builded of her thoughts. Mrs. Hartley glanced at her shrewdly.

"I suppose you've caught another 'new-woman' notion. Poverty is easily experienced, my dear, and dandelions easily picked. I wouldn't experiment too far in that direction, though, if I were you."

Daveen was silent. Her mother's irony embarrassed her. But, in a quick rush of feeling, she flung out her arms and hid her face against her mother's shoulder.

"Oh, mother!" she sobbed childishly. "I'm miserable—just as miserable as I can be!"

Her mother did not answer. Daveen felt her hands awkwardly caressing her, and their touch was strangely pitiful, betraying an overwhelming emptiness of sympathy.

"Have you spoken to your father about it?" she heard her mother saying quietly, and the unemotional words disclosed a fact that had never before been apparent to Daveen. This was perhaps the first time in all of her life that she had come to her mother for comfort. Even as children, she and her sisters had taken their broken-doll tragedies to their big, handsome father. The sudden knowledge of this brought a sympathy so keen that it verged on pity, and it was with a queer little sensation of glad satisfaction that she replied to her mother's question:

"Why, no, mother. There's nothing to talk to father *about*. I—I just felt, somehow, that I wanted to talk to you. I don't know just why—but—"

She stammered hopelessly in her maze of scattered emotions. After a moment's awkward silence, her mother pushed her away so that she could look into her wet eyes. Daveen was the loveliest of her children—a strong-featured face, with an exquisitely clear skin and wide eyes of a color peculiarly like the shade of her red-brown hair.

Daveen stared back at her, fascinated and astonished at the tenderness she had awakened in her mother's face. But if Mrs. Hartley had read the secret of her daughter's love for Frank Worthington—all of whose worldly possessions were not equal in value to the great white stone flashing on Daveen's

finger—she made no sign of having done so.

"The thing you need, Daveen," she said quietly, like a physician announcing a diagnosis, "is to do a little *thinking*. I always thought you were a little more inclined that way than Jane and Betty, but it seems you haven't allowed yourself to do much of it."

"Why, mother!"

Daveen's voice was reproachful, she having been always reputed as the philosopher of the family. She caught a flash of rare scorn in her mother's dark, deep eyes.

"Yes, Daveen, I suppose you imagine you think, but in reality, my dear, you only follow your feet."

"Follow my feet!" laughed Daveen. "What a remarkable condemnation from you, mother!"

Mrs. Hartley flushed, rather painfully, Daveen thought.

"Oh, yes," she admitted, "perhaps you inherit the tendency. But to return to what you were saying. Perhaps, if you can tell me more definitely what is worrying you, I can advise you."

Daveen lowered her eyes. She felt uncomfortable and ill at ease, and wished intensely that she had not come to her mother.

"I didn't mean to urge your confidences, Daveen. Perhaps your father can help you," said Mrs. Hartley in her cold, even tones.

"Oh, no, mother. It isn't that—that I'm *worried* about anything. But—but I'm just not *sure* that Jim and I are going to be as happy as I've always hoped we should. I've—I've always wanted my marriage to be as fine and splendid as yours and dad's"—Daveen's eyes misted and her lips trembled—"and—and I'm afraid, somehow," she finished lamely.

Her mother laughed softly.

"Why, dear child, am I the happiest woman you know?"

"Oh, yes; and dad's the happiest

man," said Daveen eagerly. "And that's why I want to be *so* sure about—about Jim and me. I couldn't *endure* a marriage like Jane's or Betty's."

"No-o? Don't you think Jane and Betty are happy?"

"Oh, not the way *you* are."

Her mother flushed with pleasure, and her voice softened.

"Why, Daveen dear, I had no idea that you had such reverence for your father's and my happiness. Your father and I *have* been very happy, but I didn't know it was so apparent."

"Why, mother! Why, every time dad looks at you, why—oh, it's just nice to see him!"

"Do I never 'look' at him?" asked her mother, laughing, but Daveen colored slightly under her close scrutiny.

"No-o, but then you're so different from dad. I know you must give him a wonderful love or he wouldn't adore you so. I've always been so proud to think *my* dad never—oh, you know what I mean, mother—never even thinks about any woman but you."

"Why, dearest girl, are you afraid—that is, do you doubt Jim?"

"No—not Jim."

"Oh," said her mother, and, after a little silence, added quietly: "Are you trying to tell me that you love Frank, Daveen?"

"I'm afraid so, mother. Oh, please don't be so—so *businesslike* about it! Couldn't you help me—*somehow*?"

Her mother reached out and took her cold hands firmly between her own warm ones.

"Yes, dear; I can help you. If you love Frank, go to him. Nothing could be more simple in all the world."

"I knew you'd say that, loving dad the way you do—but I'm afraid."

"Yes," said her mother, "of course. But you have much more reason to fear a life with a man you don't wholly love than to fear *poverty*, even, and Frank would not mean that."

"Oh, you don't know *how* poor he is, mother! You haven't any idea! And he wants to go West! West! It isn't that I haven't thought about it, and tried and tried and tried to convince myself. But look at Doris Canfield—and Kitty Nevin, and every girl we know that hasn't married well. They were so *sure* they'd be happy, and look at their miserable lives!"

Daveen's cheeks were scarlet and her voice had risen shrilly. The two girls whom she mentioned had come back to their fathers' homes, disillusioned and bitter; and Kitty Nevin's life was now food for the gossip of many idle tongues.

"If you're so sure, Daveen," said her mother coldly, "that marrying Frank would mean such utter distress, why are you allowing yourself to question your engagement to Jim?"

"Because, mother, I love Frank—I *want* him—all the time—every minute—every second. Oh, it's easy for *you* to say to follow your love, but dad had everything to make your life comfortable and beautiful. And it isn't only that *I* might be discontented, but if *I* should marry Frank and be unhappy, it would be the cruellest thing I could possibly do to him."

"No more cruel—if as much so—than to marry Jim, not loving him. Jim is a splendid man, too, Daveen."

"Oh, I know, mother! What *shall* I do?"

Mrs. Hartley looked deep into the girl's troubled eyes.

"There's only one thing, dear," she said gently, "and that is to find your own cure for your restlessness. If you'll follow my advice—But then you won't!"

She broke off abruptly with a significant little gesture. Daveen intercepted the hand that reached for her novel.

"Oh, mother," she pleaded, "please don't go back into your shell again! It's your advice that *I want*."

"Then you'll go with me to a place I know in the Wyoming mountains," concluded her mother, as quietly as if she had not heard Daveen's interruption, "and forget this life entirely for a month."

"To the mountains—in *Wyoming*!"

"You see! Your feet haven't been there, and you're afraid to show them the way."

"Oh, but, mother! It's you! I can't imagine *you* being able to *live* a whole month in the mountains! Besides, wouldn't the family *collapse* at the mere thought of it?"

"Very probably. But *you* wouldn't. However, I only suggested it."

Daveen stared at her mother curiously, and saw the older woman's eyes soften with a strange, new tenderness. Hesitantly, she put her sweet, warm face against her mother's, and thrilled to feel her mother's arms closely about her.

"I'll adore to go, mother," she murmured. "I think it'll be far more wonderful for me really to learn to know you than to get acquainted with myself."

A note of peculiar hardness crept into her mother's voice.

"My dear, be content to know yourself. I'm afraid you'll only waste time trying to know *me*. So we'll take a month, then, dear, to see if we can't find some flower a little finer than dandelions that is just as satisfying as orchids, but not quite so perishable."

"How funny, mother, to hear parables dropping from *your* lips! You haven't found orchids very perishable, or at least dad's always provided you with fresh ones."

"Yes," said her mother gently; and then: "We'll start day after to-morrow, for it'll take your sisters at least two days to rally from the shock. We mustn't be too severe."

"And dad?" laughed Daveen.

"Oh, he'll be happy growing more orchids to——"

"To give to you," finished Daveen.

"Yes," said her mother.

Daveen lay face downward on the pine-needled earth, unmindful even of the long black mountain beetle investigating the diamond on her outflung left hand—the diamond in whose sparkling depths rested the defeat of Frank Worthington and laughed the triumph of Jim Godfrey.

For her mother's plan had not succeeded; Daveen was fuller than ever of a burning unrest, and yet her keen young mind could not allow her heart to lead the way. She had never before fully sensed the depth of her longing for Frank Worthington. Out in this great Western place, the smell of the fresh pine needles, the scolding of the golden orioles, the sound of the workmen's rough, hearty laughter, and the ever-deepening splashing of the mountain stream, loosened a flood of longing almost unbearable.

But her reasoning—her calm, sane realization of the future—lay all on the side of Jim Godfrey. He meant everything that was desirable in her life; her stables, her kennels, her cars, her charities—they would all have to go if she married Frank Worthington. And then there was Jim's love for her; she could not question its honesty and fineness. And there was a distinct pride in having won him—a man whom many women had desired.

The quiet arguments of her mother irritated Daveen strangely; they seemed to influence her toward the very things her mother argued *against*. She chafed sorely under the thought that her mother felt no sympathy for her nor the least understanding of her position.

"How can *you* advise me?" she had flared out one day. "You, who have had everything, what *can* you possibly know about a life with scarcely *any*

of the comforts I've been used to? Why, not one of the girls we know has stood up under the conditions that you're urging me to accept!"

"If they weren't strong enough to accept a life with the man they loved, they would have failed far more with one they didn't," her mother had answered.

"Jane and Betty are happy," Daveen had argued stubbornly.

Her mother had turned slowly to her, a strange look of baffled exasperation on her face.

"Your sisters, my dear, did not commit the indiscretion of falling in love—with any one but themselves. You have. They know nothing but the formula for a 'well-made' marriage. You do. But that's not the question. If *you* marry a man you don't love—no matter how bitterly you may regret it—there's something in your nature that will *force* you on with the miserable pretense of it, at the expense of *your very soul*. If Jane or Betty should come to the conclusion that they were not happy, they wouldn't hesitate to divorce their husbands—and try something else. *You* have not that alternative. I'm not arguing these things with you from a selfish motive—as your irritation often suggests. But I should—for your *own* sake—rather see you in your coffin than married to Jim Godfrey."

Daveen had been frightened at her mother's vehemence, and after that morning, had avoided all mention of the things that tortured her mind. And Mrs. Hartley had again put on her cold armor of reserve, which Daveen found so pitifully hard to penetrate.

She was thinking of her mother that morning as she lay on the warm, sweet-scented earth, her lithe young body stretched full length on the pine needles; but, strangely enough, the memory of her mother's words roused an unexplainable antagonism in her

heart. If there were only one sane *reason* for not giving herself to Jim Godfrey—a splendid, clean man who loved her!

Impatiently, she heard low voices nearing her across the clematis-covered fence. She listened for them to pass on, but evidently there was as tempting a sheltered nook on the other side as the one that she had found, for the slow footsteps halted and the voices gradually cleared. Daveen knew the man's voice. It was the big, handsome mine owner from Montana, a friend of the man who owned the summer camp. She had liked to watch the fine, free swing of his body and to hear the clear, open call of his voice, as he went whistling and working about the camp. He fitted into the wild mountain place as did the pine trees topping the hills. Last of all men, she would have imagined him seeking out a secret nook for love-making, and she wondered who of the guests was amusing herself with him; quite probably some long-married matron, searching ever for diversion.

"Well, little Molly," caressed his big, free voice, "we've only three days more. I don't know how in God's name I'm going to let you go!"

"Nor I how I can go! But, oh, I've had *such* happiness, David—*such* happiness, after all these years! It must have been *Heaven* that sent you here!"

Daveen's body quivered like some shot thing. Her face flamed red and swiftly faded white, for the woman's voice, charged with a happiness she had never heard—was her mother's!

"My own little Molly!" The man's voice was immeasurably tender, and was silenced with the soft hush of a kiss.

"I haven't been called 'Molly' for almost thirty years. Oh, David, I'm old, *old!*"

Daveen had started to creep away on her hands and knees, but their voices drew her back like a magnet. Long

ago her mother had told her that she had been named Daveen because her mother had wished her to be a little boy, whom she had wanted to name David. *This was David.* Daveen bent her head into her open palms and listened without shame, because her emotions were so overpowering as to drive away every other feeling but that of intense wonder.

"Yes, it's been almost thirty years," said the man simply, "and never a day in one of them but what I've pictured you—with him. If you'd only let me know you—you regretted it, it—it would have helped."

"I couldn't, David. After I'd made a mess of *our* lives, I *couldn't* hurt his, too. Why, all through these years, he's never doubted my love an instant."

She laughed, a pitiful little laugh of a bitterly gained triumph. The man's next words showed plain the hurt of it.

"You couldn't have fooled *any* man if you'd been wanting me half as much as I've longed for you! I saw a picture, not very long ago, in one of the magazines—you standing on a porch, with a tennis racquet in your hand, laughing up at *him*. And you've liked every single thing his damned money's given you. And don't try to tell me a woman can have three children and fool *any* man about her love for him!"

"But, David, you don't know—you can't understand—"

"No, you're right, Mary—I *can't* understand. And if you've been loving me all the time, I don't understand it all the more. I've walked these hills the whole night through, many and many a time. I used to wake up in the night, after you first married him, *crying* like a little kid. I've talked like a fool to the trees, and I've spent *hours* trying to remember how your cheek used to feel against my face. Oh, *God!* And thirty years of *it*, with God knows how much longer still!"

"Oh, David, David!" Daveen heard her mother say faintly, her own throat threatening to burst with its dry sobs. Her mother's voice weakened twice to a whisper, before she could gather her words clearly:

"Oh, David, *can't* you realize that it's been just that way with me, only—only I've had the horrible *pretense* with it? And the children must have known it by instinct, for they've never loved me as they do their father. They always went to him with all their baby troubles, even. How could they help it? His *love* was in them—the part they had of *me* was only flesh and blood. When they were little things—so pretty, David!—I used to watch them playing in the nursery and pretend to myself that they were *your* babies, and that Daveen, with her bobbed hair, was a little boy named David. Why, I used to play that game till they were ten years old!"

"Oh, Mary," whispered the man brokenly, his voice scarcely covering the woman's deep, broken sobbing, "*why* didn't you play fair and come to me?"

"Oh, David, David, David," said the woman wearily, her lips finding evident comfort in his softly repeated name, "*can't* you see that I had to think of Keith? But why should it hurt you, David, to have me speak of him? If you could only understand that the only joy his arms have ever had for me was when I closed my eyes and brought *your* arms in their place! I know you'll never understand, David, but—but I've tried to make up for my wrong to you—to us—by playing fair with *him*."

"I guess our ideas of playing fair aren't much the same," said the man bitterly. "My idea is that when a man and woman have loved each other for thirty-two years, their love ought to be decent enough to let the whole world know. I've never sneaked anything yet that brought me any comfort. We're not old yet, and why *can't* you get a

divorce? That, to me, would be playing fair to everybody."

Daveen shivered. With thirty years of longing, those two were not yet old! She thought of herself and the man she loved; it brought a queer, sickened look to her face. With a curious passion of curiosity, she held herself tense, waiting for her mother's answer. It was pitifully weak in contrast to the man's rough, elemental honesty; she was chained utterly in the sinews that her life had bound about her.

"Oh, David, how *can* you make it so hard? You know I can't break all the ties after these many years!"

"You could if you wanted to do right," said the man stubbornly.

"I *do* want to do right!" She screamed the words with a sudden snap of tension, and Daveen gave a smothered cry. "I *do*! You put me all in the wrong, but I'm not! I tell you Keith loves me, too. You can't seem to realize *his* rights, and my three girls. And in all these years I've loved no one—*no one*. Always there's been the great, warm, wonderful love *for you* to torture me! And now Daveen is facing the same thing—and if she can't decide for herself—I—I'm going to tell her. It'll be the bitterest humiliation of my life——"

Daveen crept away from the thick hedge on her hands and knees; now that *she* had been mentioned, she was conscious for the first time of eavesdropping. She did not straighten until the young pine trees hid her. Her head throbbed with intense pain, and her cheeks burned.

An hour later her mother and the man for whom Daveen had been named came into sight and followed the overgrown path out of the forest. It seemed another woman, surely, than her mother, that tall, slender figure in white, walking hand in hand, like a youngster, with the big, broad-shouldered man. Daveen watched her with incredulous

eyes—her cold, dignified mother and the man she loved!

Before they reached the clearing that lay in front of the camp, they glanced stealthily about, as young lovers untutored in love's knowledge might have done; then her mother put both her hands upon the man's shoulders, and he took her in his arms and kissed her.

After wandering about for a time, unable to clear her mind of her merciless headache, Daveen found a path leading to the stream, where she bathed her head and cooled her slender left hand in the icy water until a great stone slipped easily from her finger.

It was late afternoon when she returned to camp. She found her mother sitting idly in the doorway of their little cabin, an open novel in her lap. Un-

seen, she studied the quiet, beautiful face that betrayed so little of its sorrow. Then, with sudden decision, she walked quickly to her mother and leaned low over the back of her chair.

"Mother dear," she whispered, "I've decided on the dandelions. Oh, mother, I'm so, so happy to have found the way *all myself!*"

She turned her mother's head so that she might kiss her lips, and saw a flash of gladness light the quiet face. She waited, breathless, for her mother's word, but thirty years of armor are not lightly pierced.

"*I thought* you couldn't cheat yourself, out in a place like this, dear," said her mother gently. "But of course your father will be terribly disappointed. We must write to him to-night."



A BACKLOG

GNARLED and knotted and lichen-blotted, a giant stark in a sylvan pall,
Cloven of ax to his dull red heart, stricken of men to a crashing fall,
Prone he lies on a chimney bier. Dryads are crying and calling his name,
As the welling smoke makes censer wreaths for the high mass sung by the
shrilling flame.

Without, like the whisper of faërie wings, fluttereth, falleth feathery snow.
Above the whisper, the flame mass rings; the dusk is dyed with its cheery glow.
Harken, hearken, the while it tells the greenwood's waxing in sun and rain,
To stand, a benison goodly tall, shelter and shield of the teeming plain,

Haven sure of the fairy folk and the shy, small creatures of the wild,
Loving love with its hearts of oak, thrilled at the laugh of a happy child,
Dropping balm into stricken souls and welcoming to its luring shade
Weary ones, forspent, forlorn, asking not where their feet had strayed.

Heat of the sun the giant stored deep in his heart, and the strength of frost,
Garnered, both, by the law of life that life may change, but is never lost.
Prone, yet proud, he reckoning makes with the rainy winds and the summer days—
His warm, true heart in the red, red coals, his gallant soul in the leaping blaze.

MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.



More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Christina of Sweden:

The Queen Who Would be a King

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

A SLENDER, blue-eyed cavalier sprawled at the fireside table of an inn near Copenhagen. His dandified ruffles were slightly torn, his belt was awry, his hands were anything but clean. Nevertheless, the pretty barmaid who waited on him eyed the guest with keenest interest, and offered him her choicest wine. This favor the cavalier took as a matter of course, but in return graciously allowed himself to be led into conversation with the friendly and admiring damsel.

The talk took a spirited turn, and the guest presently made some very facetious and uncomplimentary remarks about the King of Denmark. The barmaid, unable to conceal her horror, backed into the kitchen, round-eyed and round-mouthed.

With a laugh, the cavalier pushed back his chair, threw a coin on the table, and swaggered out of the room.

He mounted his horse and started on his journey. A moment later, however, he was overtaken by a breathless page, who explained between gasps that the "barmaid" to whom he had spoken so slightly of the king was no less a person than the Queen of Denmark.

It had been a double masquerade. The cavalier, as well as the barmaid, was a woman. Both were queens.

The cavalier was her royal majesty, Christina of Sweden.

After receiving the page's mumbled message, Christina—who had at once divined the identity of the waitress—threw back her head and laughed gleefully.

"I'm no seeress," she cried. "How could I be supposed to guess who she was, in such a dress? However, she has herself to thank for it. Tell her that people who try such tricks are apt to hear more than pleases them!"

Christina had always wanted to be a man. Her father had wanted her to be a man. Her mother had wanted her to be a man.

Nature had committed lese majesty in making her a woman—a super-woman at that. Whenever she could pry herself loose from her super-woman lure, Christina was denying nature by trying to become as much of a man as possible.

Her father was Gustavus Adolphus, "the Lion of the North," who thrust Sweden forward from a third-rate power until, for a dazzling moment, it stood at the forefront of the world's nations. He, and his Bismarcklike chancellor, Oxenstiern, had hoped that a son might carry on the glorious work

when death should take the scepter from Gustavus.

The girl's mother was a sloppily spineless beauty, who spent most of her time crying and eating candy. In 1632, when Christina was only six years old, her father was killed in battle. The queen mother promptly draped her rooms and those of Gustavus in black, put crape on all the pictures in the palace, shut herself in with her grief, and took the women of her entourage with her.

Oxenstiern wisely packed the child off to a distant castle and strove to carry out his dead monarch's wishes for her future amid more normal surroundings. Gustavus had left full instructions regarding his daughter's education, and Johannes Matthiae, one of the first scholars of the time, carried them out to the letter.

Christina was an eager and apt pupil, and inherited many of the qualities of her illustrious father. She devoured learning, and would scarcely allow herself the time to eat or sleep. She was the pride and wonder of Sweden, and was held up as a model to all the children of the realm.

"Look at our good young queen," critical parents would say. "Why are you not like her? She has a mind above foolishness and frivol."

By the time she was twelve, she had mastered eight languages. She could quote Greek by the hour, and her favorite light literature was Tacitus and Horace. At seventeen she argued theology with bishops and philosophy with savants.

She also developed an uncanny knowledge of statecraft.

Incidentally, she had learned to swear like a pirate and to bring down a running hare with a bullet, and was the most dashing and skillful horsewoman in the kingdom, often staying in the saddle ten hours at a stretch.

She was short and slender and very

handsome, with magnificent, sparkling blue eyes and a wealth of golden hair. She was made up of contradictions. When angry, she had the devil's own temper. At other times, she could be charming. She was captivating and she was cruel. She was a supreme scholar and an abject slave of the senses, a marvelous stateswoman and a buffoon.

Through and around all this kaleidoscopic assortment of traits ran the intangible power that made her one of the most spectacular super-women of a century that abounded in super-women. She alternately dazzled and disgusted Europe and was called "the Sybil" and "the Semiramis of the North."

She was unmoral, rather than immoral.

"From my girlhood," she once said, "I had a disregard for the proprieties usually observed by my sex."

Bathing she considered an utter waste of time. Once when a courtier tried to give her a tip on the value of cleanliness, she retorted:

"Wash! That's all very well for people who have nothing else to do!"

She combed her hair just once a week —when she felt like it; at other times, once in two weeks.

On Sundays, she was willing to spend half an hour at her toilet; but on all other days, she hustled it through in fifteen minutes. Her linen was generally ragged and torn. Yes, and in spite of all this, no man could resist her.

She is popularly supposed to have been without vanity, but I think she was the most utterly vain woman that ever lived. It isn't the woman who looks in the glass most, and who fusses over her frocks, and who indulges in all the myriad daintinesses of life, who is the most vain. Such a woman does this, in nine cases out of ten, because she does not trust her own powers of attraction—because in her heart of

hearts she is humble and is afraid she will not make a hit, and so does her utmost to make herself presentable. Christina, on the contrary, was so inordinately conceited, so sure of herself, that she didn't think it necessary to worry over her personal appearance or to give a thought to the small, but very necessary refinements of life. Perhaps you don't agree with me about the lack of vanity of women who prink. Think it over.

But let's get back to Christina.

In her eighteenth year, she became queen, and from the moment that she took her seat at the head of the privy council, she impressed every one around her with her superior genius. Oxenstiern said of her:

"Her majesty is not like womenfolk, but is stout-hearted and of a good understanding, so that, if she be not corrupted, we have great hopes of her."

But she was "corrupted."

She really seems to have started out to be a good queen. She caused many reforms, gave privileges to the towns, encouraged trade and manufactures, and urged foreign scholars to settle in Sweden. Science and literature made gigantic strides under her rule. Her greatest act of all was bringing the Thirty Years' War to an end.

In the early part of her reign, she never allowed herself more than four hours sleep and not always that.

She surrounded herself with scholars, all of whom became her slaves. Chanut, the French ambassador, one of her adorers, speaks of her fascinations thus:

"Some people lay the deference of her ministers in the council chamber to the fact that she is a woman, believing that the attraction of her sex compels submission to her will, but the truth is that her authority is due to her great qualities, and that a king who had the same qualities would wield an equal influence."

His further description, however, only proves what he never denied—that he himself was entirely under her super-woman spell.

"Her countenance changes with every change of mental emotion," he says; "so much so that at times, after the interval of a minute, she is scarcely recognizable. For the most part, she is pensive, and in every point of view she finds something that is agreeable. If she disapproves of a remark made, her face is covered for a moment with a cloud, which fills one with terror. Her spirit is of incredible virtue, and she is passionately fond of honor."

Which brings us to her first serious love affair—serious to her, at least. I have slurred over no less than four ardent early romances which mean everything to their victims and nothing at all to their victimess.

This new affair, however, was to mark Christina's whole life and the future of her country—perhaps of Europe, as well. For the first time, she fell in love.

To the court of Stockholm came a Swedish princeling, on a semistate, semifamily visit. He was Christina's cousin, and heir presumptive to her throne—Charles Gustavus.

The world at large beheld Charles as a dumpy and ugly youth, with the honesty and pugnacity of a stage cockney, without manners and decidedly without manner; in short, a worthy youth of the uninspiring and nonmagnetic type, less fitted by far to be cast for *Romeo*, than for *Second Citizen* or *Confused Noise Without*.

To Christina, he was not Prince Charles, but Prince Charming.

(No, this was not abnormal, as you will readily understand if you will take the trouble to glance at some of the men whom the most fascinating women of your acquaintance have married.)

She made Charles her demigod, lifting him upon a cardiac pedestal that no

man, before or after, occupied. All the force of her tremendous nature went into this mad love of hers for her cousin.

Naturally, he gave love for love. Dazzled by her beauty, the thick-headed little prince declared himself her slave for life. But Christina would not have it so. It was she, not he, she insisted, who must wear forever the golden shackles of serfdom.

They were both gloriously young. So they went through all the blissful agony of the penny-novelette hero and heroine whom cruel fate seeks to tear asunder. They ordained deathless secrecy for this immortal love of theirs, and trembled lest it be discovered by a heartless world; as witness this letter of Christina's, written January 5, 1644, and smuggled to her sweetheart by a professionally trusty go-between:

BELOVED COUSIN: I have your dear letter, and it shows me you dare not confide your most sacred thoughts to paper. Hard though this is, you are wise. Yet we can correspond in cipher. Oh, we must take every precaution! For never were my advisers so inflexibly set against us as now!

But they shall never have their way! Never! They whisper of a match between me and the Elector of Brandenburg. But neither he nor any one else in all the world—however rich or great—shall ever swerve my heart from you.

My love for you is so strong that only death has power to overcome it. If—which God in His mercy forbid—death should take you first, then my heart would die with you. My soul and my love would follow you to eternity, there to dwell with you forever.

Now the funny part of it was that all Sweden knew of this love. Oxenstiern and every diplomat in Stockholm had for years toiled and schemed to bring about a marriage between Christina and Charles.

There was about the same opposition to their union as to the acceptance of a billion-dollar legacy. Statecraft demanded the marriage. The path of true love not only ran smooth, but was

steam-rolled and then carpeted with violets. The whole world was in combination to bring the lovers together.

Charles and Christina knew all this perfectly well. They knew also that there was general rejoicing over the amazing fact that theirs was not to be the usual marriage of convenience, but an ardent love match. Yet what man or woman who has personal memories of divine insanity will sneer at the two youthful sweethearts for their pretty game of make-believe? If we smile at their elaborated efforts at camouflage, I know the smile is kindly, not derisive. In any case, no one need grudge Christina her little hour in Arcady. It was short enough, this hour of hers, and it was the last she was to spend in that poetical bourne.

For a while, the clandestine-public engagement continued, waxing ever warmer and more ideal. Then something happened—to this day, no one knows what.

A hundred conjectures—all of them mere guesses and all, perhaps, wide of the truth—have been made. The only fact really known is that the engagement was broken, and by Christina.

She was not tired of him. She had not fallen in love with some one else. There is every reason to believe that she adored his memory to the latest day of her life. For she went at once to the council and demanded to be allowed to abdicate the throne in Charles' favor. She knew his cockney ambitions, you see. And by this supreme renunciation of her birthright, she was bestowing on him the highest farewell gift in her power.

Oxenstiern and the rest were aghast. They refused to consider so mad a proposition. Christina insisted. They asked her reasons. She replied that she was weary of the burdens of state and that she craved freedom. She said, moreover, that she had resolved never

to marry and that this resolve was unshakable.

The council still refused to grant her plea, urging that she had no right to desert her post, that she was necessary to Sweden's welfare, and that Charles Gustavus would, in any case, be a most unwelcome substitute for her.

Christina always had her own way, soon or late. She knew that if she were out of the running, the nation would be obliged to accept Charles as king. Therefore, she proceeded to make herself so obnoxious that Sweden would be glad to get rid of her at any price.

As in everything, she went at this task of unpopularity getting with a zest that carried all before it.

Among other details, she neglected most shamelessly every routine duty of statesmanship. She purposely made diplomatic blunders that lost for Sweden much of its hard-gained prestige. She horrified the almost puritanic court by inviting thither a horde of men of doubtful character and of women concerning whose characters there could be no doubt. Debauchery took the place of scholastic asceticism. The queen plunged into a double love affair with two foreign attachés—De la Gardie and Bourdelot—and capped the scandal by inciting them to mortal combat with each other.

She was drunk oftener than she was sober—especially in public—and she grew more disgustingly slovenly than ever. To make matters worse, she adopted man's attire and wore it on all possible occasions.

It was at this time that she formed the embarrassing habit of breaking in on other people's stories which contained politely veiled equivocations for unprintable words by supplying the evaded word in a loud voice and in its coarsest form. This habit she later carried with her on her travels, to the

horror of her politer hosts in Paris and Rome.

Before you censure Christina, as the world at large has censured her, for all this, stop to remember why she did it. Remember, please, that it was a deliberate and prolonged act of throne suicide for the sake of the man she loved and had lost. Perhaps, too, her mind—which undoubtedly became more or less unbalanced in after years—had already been robbed of some of its splendid poise by the unknown tragedy that robbed her of her lover.

At all events, she was successful in reconciling the Swedish people to her abdication. She received permission at last to turn over the throne to Charles and to take herself out of the country whose idol she once had been.

Clad as a cavalier, with her hair cut short and a gun across her saddle bow, and followed by only four servants, she galloped across the frontier into Denmark. As her horse leaped the brook that formed the boundary line between the two realms, Christina waved her hat and yelled:

"I'm free! I'm *free!* I hope I shall never set foot in Sweden again!"

For a while she traveled in Denmark. It was during this sojourn that the Danish queen heard of her eccentric ways and resolved to satisfy royal curiosity, at firsthand, by spying upon Christina from behind the disguise of a barmaid.

From Denmark, Christina journeyed to Hamburg. Here for a little while she discarded male attire and appeared as Sweden's ex-queen. Into each large town she made a state entry in gorgeous costume, riding with regal dignity through the principal street, amid the salutations and cheers of the crowd. Each mayor, or burgomaster, and council presented her with an address which she in turn received with queenly graciousness.

Then, without the slightest warning,

she would make grimaces at the cheering crowd, interrupt a loyal speech with a loud oath or a rude jest, or burst into a peal of laughter. The reception over, she would wander from inn to inn among the peasantry until she was ready to resume her splendid state. Her restless spirit ever scoured her on.

Finally she reached Rome—the scene of her greatest triumph. She swept the Eternal City off its feet. Her brilliant personality, in a land where women were held in subjection, bewildered all who came in contact with her. She dazzled the people by her wit, shocked them by her indiscretions.

She had a strenuous love affair with Prince Colonna, which set every one agog. The balcony of her box at the opera was crowded with adorers, who looked on with delight at the ballerinas and exquisitely dressed singing girls from France whom Christina had invited to the city. The noblest heads in the house were turned by her charm.

Her wild extravagance finally impoverished her. She pawned her jewelry, quitted Rome, and drifted to France.

Sweden came to her aid and replenished her purse. Thereupon, she repaid all her extravagances. France entertained her royally. The Duke of Guise was assigned to act as her escort, and says of her at this time:

"She has a well-shaped arm and a white and pretty hand. Her bodice, laced behind, is not straight. Her chemise shows below her skirt, which is ill-fashioned and awry. She is much powdered and pomatumed, has men's boots, and in point of fact has almost a man's voice and quite a man's ways. Though she is proud and haughty, she can be polite and even caressing in manner. She speaks eight languages, and is as learned as our Academy and our Sorbonne together. Indeed, she is a very extraordinary person."

At Compiègne, the Queen of France entertained her. Mademoiselle de

Montpensier thus described Christina's antics during the visit:

"The queen swore like a trooper, threw her legs about, putting first one and then the other over the arms of her chair. She took attitudes such as I have only seen in the case of Trivelin and Jodelet, the buffoons. She would fall into deep reveries, sigh loudly, and then all at once come to her senses as if she had awakened from a dream."

None the less, Christina is credited with the brazen theft of mademoiselle's lover, at Compiègne; a theft that may or may not have colored the Montpensier description of the royal guest.

At Paris, Louis XIV. ordained a gala performance at the opera, in Christina's honor. She sat well forward in the royal box, pipe in mouth, her booted feet dangling over the rail. These eccentricities did not prevent a dozen fastidious noblemen from vying for her fickle favor.

Out of the ruck of her adorers at this time looms the tragic figure of the Marquis Monaldeschi. Nature and circumstances had not made him tragic. Fate was to do that.

Monaldeschi was strikingly handsome, brilliant, fascinating, a professional lady-killer. He lost his susceptible heart to Christina and wooed her with a fervor that did not go unrewarded. She made him an officer of her household; thereby adding a tinge of respectability to a situation that stood in sore need of such a commodity.

But Monaldeschi was not content with his position, nor was he the only person discontented with it. Count Sentinelli—an Italian nobleman who had followed Christina from Rome and vowed he would follow her to the traditional "ends of the world"—was even less contented with Monaldeschi's place as favorite of the hour. With true Borgian craft, he sought to undermine the marquis. He laid his lines and

crosslines with consummate skill, paying goodly prices for the testimony and alleged proofs he sought.

When everything was ready, Sentinelli sought private audience with Christina in the palace that had been set apart for her use in the French capital. There he accused Monaldeschi of carrying on a desperate, if covert, intrigue with another woman, and with making fun of Christina and of her love for him. He added, as an unimportant detail, that Monaldeschi had sold certain state secrets confided to him by her.

I have said that Christina was not lacking in vanity. A woman far less vain might well have been roused to fury by news that her lover was not only unfaithful to her, but was laughing at her with his new sweetheart.

Christina demanded proofs. Sentinelli had them on tap, plenty of them. It was a time and country in which money could supply an unbreakable chain of evidence for murder—including the corpse—or for any lesser or greater offense. And Sentinelli had money.

Christina was convinced. She did not fly into one of her screaming, cursing, chair-throwing rages. She became all at once hideously calm. After a few terse commands to Sentinelli and to some of her servants, she sent for Monaldeschi. He came eagerly into the room where she awaited him. Smiling, and with arms outstretched, he advanced to greet her. Then he became aware of the presence of Sentinelli and the others, and of the atmosphere that surcharged the place. A blind deaf-mute would have known that something was terribly amiss.

With no show of emotion, Christina opened and ended the interview by announcing to the dumfounded favorite that he had but five minutes more of life.

Monaldeschi cried out in horror, beg-

ging to know what he had done to deserve such punishment. For answer, Christina struck him heavily across the mouth with her gauntleted hand, bade two of her armed servants seize and silence him, and then turned to a priest—Le Bel by name—whom Sentinelli had brought thither.

"Father," she said, "I leave this man to you. Prepare him for death."

Without another glance at the struggling and panic-stricken Monaldeschi, she passed out into the adjoining drawing-room where, says a chronicler, "she gossiped light-heartedly with her ladies."

"Father Le Bel," the account continues, "was smitten with amaze, and he followed her to the drawing-room, where upon his knees he pleaded for the marquis' life. She barely looked at the priest, turning away then with a laugh, and continuing her gossip. Monaldeschi tore free from his captors and, pursued by them, dragged himself to her feet, beseeching her, by the wounds of the Savior, to have mercy.

"Kill him!" she commanded of Sentinelli. "And do it quickly."

"Then the butchery began. Before the marquis, in choked and anguished voice, had begun his last confession on earth, the count pushed him against the wall and struck the first blow. Monaldeschi was unarmed. He clutched the murderer's sword, and three of his fingers fell to the floor. Servants joined in the attack. Bleeding from a score of wounds, the marquis collapsed on the floor. A final thrust in the throat from Sentinelli's sword, and the deed was done. While her former lover was butchered, and with his death cries in her ears, Christina stood in the near-by anteroom and joked of the latest court scandals, her gay laughter mingling with the cries and moans of her victim."

All Europe was spellbound with horror over the jealous woman's deed. She, however, declared that she had

been within her rights and had executed a simple act of justice upon a traitor.

Louis XIV. was more indignant over her usurpation of life-and-death power, which he claimed as a royal prerogative, than over the actual crime. He vowed he would have her beheaded as a common felon. But Mazarin, his prime minister, pointed out that all sorts of international complications would follow. So the king contented himself with sending Christina a savage command to leave Paris at once.

He coupled this decree of banishment with a pietistic suggestion that she do penance for her sin. To which message she sent back this reply:

"If Monaldeschi were still alive, I should not sleep to-night before seeing him dead at my feet. I have no reason to repent. I am in no humor to justify myself in respect to his death, which has become one of the pleasantest memories of my career. All this clamor about him seems to me as absurd as it is insolent. Let the world think of me what it will. To me it is a matter of indifference."

This ended her court life. Driven forth from France, shunned by her former adorers, disowned by Sweden, which withdrew her pension, she spent

the remainder of her days as little better than an impoverished outcast, defiant and impenitent to the last.

As she lay dying, at the age of sixty-three, old adherents took pity on her and sent her a large sum of money. She spent it characteristically.

"I will go out of the world," she declared, "in a manner that befits me."

So she put the bulk of her cash windfall into a splendid mortuary robe and assured herself a regal funeral. The robe was "of white brocade embroidered with flowers and gold ornamentation, with trimmings and buttons of gold and with a fringe of gold around the hem."

In accord with the arrangements she had made, her body lay in state, surrounded by a thousand tapers and swathed in the mortuary robe. A crown was on her head and a scepter in her hand.

"More than two centuries have passed," says Thornton Hall, "since her crooked body was thus laid to rest and her equally crooked soul appeared before her Creator. But historians still wrangle over her memory. Her cleverness and her fascinations are forgotten in the contemplation of the vices that made her the byword of Europe."

Next month: The Duchess de Polignac, Throne Breaker.





Princes

By Ethelyn Leslie Huston
Author of "The Man in Gray," etc.

THE residents of Somerset were exclusive, and Somerset was restricted. As the aura of a residential suburb brightens, that of the city dims in inverse ratio. The city, according to Somerset, was a noisy and malodorous sort of melting pot from which money issued to support people who didn't live there. People who did live in the city were necessary parts of the monetary mechanism, distantly and vaguely seen as a mass, and not important.

Aside from the mechanical cogs, there were a few millionaires and millionaire aspirants who clung to the scene of their spectacular rise to wealth, still dizzy from the struggle and afraid to leave its whirl because a whirl was the only thing they knew anything about and its stoppage would result in a mental vacuum. And millionaires, with nature, abhor a vacuum.

Somerset did not have any poor people, owing to the restrictions aforesaid and realty valuations, and as foreign missions were no longer fashionable and the Red Cross slumbered in a pre-war period, Somerset directed its attention to its country-club activities and matters pertaining to the Town Beautiful.

When the Rodman Sloans built their Spanish-mission cream-stucco home there, it was a happy *via media* between the modest bungalows on the one hand and the period houses glimpsed here and there behind their park trees and shrubbery, suggestive of wealth held sternly in subjection to nature and the minor key. Somerset didn't like noise and frowned on the individual shout. Somerset homes blended, with imper-

ceptible dividing lines, into one another and with the hills. They tapestried in soft pastels and restful greens out to the limpid emerald of the golf links, and even the motor cars purred very softly along the coolly oiled and tree-shaded roads that were like dim and lofty cathedral aisles.

From the vine-draped cream of the Sloan home, the gables of Hugh Prendergast's Anne Hathaway "cottage" could be seen among the maples and elms. The garage of the Prendergast "cottage" was about as large as the cream stucco, but Somerset made very slight social distinction between period house and mission, between mission and bungalow.

Rodman Sloan was architect of many of the houses that drew fastidiously back into the seclusion of their shrubbery, with their great, many-paned glass doors opening hospitably out on wide, shadowy porches and stone-flagged terraces; their ivied porte-cochères and rose-vine-embowered pergolas. He was responsible also for a jagged point here and there in the rip-saw line of the city that cut grayly through the haze as the ferry made its way like a huge turtle across the river in the morning. He always stood near the big, lazily swinging chain, where his grave eyes could rest on the protesting silken swish and sweep of the back-thrust water, and where his gaze could lift, now and then, to the vast panorama that drew slowly nearer, a sort of strange, unreal reality.

Prendergast, gayly talkative, restless, the pale gold of his amber cigarette holder clenched between his flashing white teeth, would range up alongside for a brief running fire of banter, only

to swing off again toward the stern, halting in his erratic course for greeting, jest, a pregnant sentence or two concerning the fretful pulse beat of that temperamental thing of stratagems and spoils—the Street.

Prendergast lived—joyously. While he lived, to live fully, entirely—that was his creed. He was not a philosopher. He hated the reasons of things just as he hated results. Yesterday and tomorrow were not. Why, then, bother with the whence comes or the whither goes?

Without looking for that unfound thing, the philosopher's stone, he held its secret between his teeth as a jester holds a cherry. Philosophy could teach him nothing. He wanted to do what he was doing—live and laugh. Why be a philosopher when destiny had made of one a bobolink?

It will be understood, then, that Hugh Prendergast was popular. He shrank from the sight of suffering, and his hand went readily to his pocket, if that way lay alleviation. He was known to be "approachable" on all projects, social and charitable, belonged to innumerable clubs, and served on multitudinous committees.

His frank good nature and cheerful willingness to be of service were so obviously genuine that no hesitation was felt in enlisting his time or his check book, and no project in Somerset of any moment failed to have the name of Prendergast among those at the head.

In an era of matters matrimonial that displayed barometric conditions increasingly squally, Prendergast's marriage seemed to be uniquely happy. Beatrice Prendergast was charmingly adaptable, which established her as socially popular, and she swung in with her husband's multifarious social duties with delightful good humor. Consequently they approached the crucial tenth year of married life, where the ship of Hy-

men so frequently goes on the rocks, with gay serenity.

When a novelist has carried his reader through eighty or ninety thousand words of trials and tribulations, with the laudable intention of making him forget his own woes for the time being, it merely means that the author has taken so many thousand words to tell you in so many word paintings things that, after all, are trite, commonplace, and familiar. He but tells you, in an entertaining fashion, that we all have our troubles, that into all lives some rain must fall, that every closet has its skeleton, that each man carries his burden, that—oh, well, all the old adages that trip glibly off your own tongue when you are moved to state with resignation or exasperation that life is just one darn' thing after another. And it is easier to agree with the novelist and the adage than it is to go dead against accepted conclusions and state the contrary, which happens to be the fact. Because the novelist and the adage are both wrong.

Hugh Prendergast was born of well-to-do and likewise respectable parents, rolled through institutions collegiate on oiled wheels, married the girl he wanted and the girl his parents and friends wanted him to want, and swam in financial as well as social currents in the company of his intimates with unexciting success.

The rains that fell into his life were of minor note and soothing. He had no troubles. His closet concealed nothing more gruesome than an array of fine raiment that was immaculately correct and satisfactorily John Drewesque, and neither heart nor shoulders had ever known weight or shadow of burden. He tipped lavishly and was waited upon slavishly, distributed largesse with smiling carelessness, and was generally adored. And his wife was one of the best dressed women in her set.

And of all this Susan Sloan was

thinking. The women of mid-Victorian birth are thinking. Magic laundries and telephones and electric cookers are giving them a chance to think. And things are happening. And one of the things is the sharp shaking and examining—and disrespectful discarding—of ancient formulae.

Susan Sloan watched her laughing neighbor pass smoothly down the shaded drive in his purring car, and she called the adages, beloved of her ancestors, to the judgment bar, and she frowningly dismissed them as found wanting.

"Rubbish!"

"Who is, beloved?" murmured Mrs. Harriet Davenant, her aunt, who had few illusions and accepted the fact placidly.

Mrs. Davenant was stretched gracefully on a *chaise longue*, a breakfast service on a tea wagon was drawn up beside her, and she divided her attention between wafers of golden toast and the morning papers' latest scandal. She lived in one of the huge and ornate piles of stone and pressed brick that city folk call home, but spent a good deal of her time with her favorite niece. She was a widow, of comfortable income, and looked upon the passing show with interested, if unenthusiastic, eyes.

"The Greshams have split. Little cat! I wonder how Tommy ever managed to pry her vicious little fingers loose at last! Dolly Cavendish has a baby. Still do have 'em occasionally, don't they? We're to wear trouserettes this winter. And yet men do fall in love with women now and then. I wonder why? Astigmatic, poor dears, I suppose. What's the fly in your ointment this morning in particular, honey?"

"The stupidity of things."

Mrs. Davenant lowered the paper to rest a critical gaze upon the slender figure in the window, and carefully dec-

orated a bit of toast with some marmalade.

"Growing pains, my dear. Life is made up of stupidities. That isn't news, and you have gray matter in that nice head of yours, so you knew it. What of it?"

"Next week we'll have been married ten years." Mrs. Davenant lifted her eyebrows and pursed her lips. "So will Pren and Bee. They're going to celebrate at the country club."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

Susan's fingers drummed moodily on the glass, and she stared out through the big trees at the gabled glimpses of the Hathaway cottage.

"Well—and you're not?" hazarded her aunt.

Susan wheeled and sat on the arm of a big chair bright with rose-chintz cushions and frills.

"We are not—no. I asked Rod last night if it were not time we did something rather worth while. We've kept to the small functions always, and surely, after ten years, we ought to branch out a little—as the Prens do."

"And Rod?"

"Rod said it would not be advisable—that if we started big things, we would have to keep up, and—oh, the old excuses of men—the uncertainty of business—troubled conditions—the war

"

"All true, are they not?"

"In the abstract—of course. But how does it affect people like us? We pay a little more for things, but we have more to pay with. The war doesn't change our way of living. Many of us are far better off. Pren got Bee her new car as the anniversary gift, and they're going to have an outdoor *bal masqué* at the club. Hugh always does things in a big way."

Mrs. Davenant stirred her coffee thoughtfully.

"I have not," she spoke slowly, "a

great deal of respect for men in general, you know. They're not a glowing success, as a sex. The sturdy oak seems to side-step the support of the clinging vine pretty frequently, and the half gods are becoming discouragingly extinct. But I have a great deal of respect for Rod."

Her niece threw out her hands with a gesture of impatience.

"Respect? Of course! But why not live while one lives? We have one car. The Prens have four. We give little one-dozen-guest affairs. The Prens have a hundred. We have a maid and a man. Bee has five servants. We live in this little doll's house, and Pren has a billiard room, guest suites, and the extra bachelor quarters across the terrace for their big week-end house parties. They are popular and attract all sorts of clever people—people who have brains—who do things. They enjoy!"

Mrs. Davenant nodded.

"They have, and they do, as you say. But isn't the Prendergast income more than Rod's?"

"No. Rod admits that it isn't. But where they have changed with the times and kept up with things, we have almost stood still. We have enough—oh, we're comfortable, of course, and all that!—but people expect more than they did ten years ago. Little card parties were the thing then, with little fiddly prizes and homeopathic sandwiches. Now we have elaborate things, professional people to amuse us, dancers—"

"Overdressed or undressed," in murmured parenthesis from near the tea wagon.

"Well, it seems to take the improper to stir our jaded senses nowadays," replied Mrs. Sloan. "Pink teas and prisms went out with her Britannic majesty."

"Well, they can't accuse us of aloofness from the fallen sisterhood, anyhow," sighed Mrs. Davenant piously. "You can't tell the difference between

us and the demimonde any more. Jimmy Trent said the other night that those not-to-be-mentioned ladies were driven to it to dress with ultra-modesty nowadays, to attract attention. They can't take off any more than we have already and have anything left to pin their jewels on."

She patted the brittle edges of the emptied shell in her little egg cup with the silver spoon, then turned her gaze back to her niece.

"Low bridge, Susan! The tenth year is that which the locust hath eaten. The old order has passed away. The fervor of the honeymoon has flattened. We have reached the familiar gruel flavor of the every-day-a-week, fifty-two annually. And the deadly familiarity of soup has succeeded the hot wines of Tuscany. We hunt for the reason in each other, but there we are wrong. The flame has burned out—that's all, and there's no earthly use in crying about it. We can only cherish the slow glow of the bed of coals or grow fretful and lose that, too. Which are you going to do?"

"What has that to do with Rod's—overmodest tastes, let us say?"

A rose flush of nervous irritation deepened the brilliant eyes that flared back in protest of the philosophic calm tranquilly loitering over the pretty silver toys of the breakfast service. A beautiful sweep of silver burnished Mrs. Davenant's silken head—a silver coronet with which she had bound the rebellious passions and pleas of dead years.

She looked at her niece now with a little wisely weary smile.

"Merely that it is the something the female ferret in each of us seeks with blind tenacity, my dear young friend. We hunt a something, and we can always find it, whether it's the 'other woman' or the way he wears his linen. Rod is keyed in the minor tempo—he hasn't the 'grand manner' of our spec-

tacularly popular neighbor. He made no pretense of being of that type when you married him. Why quarrel with destiny about it now?"

"Because I'm ten years older, I suppose—and have grown a little beyond the pink-tea-and-card stage."

"Exactly. And that peg will do as well as any other to hang a grievance on," returned her aunt placidly. "The ten-year wife won't be happy till she gets it. And the particular peg that threatens the machinery of the Sloan ménage with its sabotage could be worse, you know. There is neither wine, women, nor song about it."

"But it isn't necessary!" cried Mrs. Sloan impatiently.

"Neither is the other lady—but she happens," agreed Mrs. Davenant cheerfully. "Why not face the existence of this particular, and not tragic, peg as an annoying fact that might be much worse than annoying, and let it go at that?"

"You're so deadly matter of fact, Harry!"

"I don't get excited over the calm facts of the universe, my angel, if that's what you mean. What's the use?"

"But I don't see why I should submit to this absurd notion of living like semi-Quakers that Rod has. It's nonsense!"

"So is the other lady," calmly persisted Mrs. Davenant. "But the tired business man thinks she is necessary to make life endurable, *et que voulez-vous?* I can't imagine what nine-tenths of the men see in the women they swim the Hellespont for, but it's largely change of scenery. In Rod, you see the same old scenery. But why not be thankful that he's not regarding your countenance with meditative eyes?"

"Harriet Davenant! How perfectly hateful!"

Young Mrs. Sloan's lovely face grew a deeper pink with indignation, and her aunt laughed.

"Dear me! The cocksureness of you charming young matrons is very funny! Is Rod a St. Anthony? Helen's face launched a thousand ships, but the men who were so enthusiastic hadn't lived with her for ten years, honey."

"Haven't you *any* belief in the permanence of love?" Mrs. Sloan exclaimed with strong disapproval, rising from the arm of the chair like an accusing angel militant.

"Lord, no!" Mrs. Davenant reached for more marmalade and patted its golden bitter-sweetness appreciatively onto a cube of toast. "But I don't let it affect my appetite, you know. Oh, there are the exceptions that are proofs of the rule"—she waved the little silver paddle airily—"but I always think of the intoxicated gentleman who had spent the night circling the fountain in the city park, and who wearily wept on the brass-buttoned bosom of the sympathetic policeman: 'Sush a long shreet! Shame ol' trees! Shame ol' bensches! Shame ol' shenery!' That is marriage, Susan darling—'shame ol' shenery!' The Venus de Milo, Sappho, and May Irwin rolled into one would become the 'shame shenery' after ten years of fifty-two weeks each."

"You were married twelve before Uncle Bob died. Was he tired of you?" she was asked icily.

"Shouldn't wonder." Mrs. Davenant dipped the slice of lemon out of her finger bowl and squeezed it on her finger tips. "I never asked questions that might be embarrassing. Again, what's the use? So if he sought balm of Gilead for life's bitterness in forbidden gardens, it was while I was looking the other way. And I always coughed before I turned my head. Sensible folk do."

The *bal masqué* was a dream of loneliness transplanted from the Far East. The gold of the Occident bought the poesy of the Orient, and the splendid

moon that poured its radiance down on the rose glow of the Prendergast grounds, where silken lotus lilies and tiger lilies and orchids concealing a heart of light gleamed everywhere in tree and shrub, was not the cold luminary of the Western hemisphere, but rather the queenly orb of an "Arabian Nights" entertainment.

Mrs. Prendergast, as "the favorite of the harem," glowed like the odalisques famed in poems of fire and passion and tragedy. From her jeweled, up-pointed harem slippers and thin silken trousers to the cap of fire gems with swinging chains of Eastern workmanship, she glowed and shimmered and glittered, while her mouth, rouged to a ripe pomegranate blossom, laughed over teeth of pearl, and her eyes, brilliant with their deft touches of kohl, flashed in alluring dare and defiance.

Hugh Prendergast, as a harlequin in skin-tight checkerboard of silk mesh, with his short black satin mask and long, flexible sword, flitted here and there, the spirit of jollity incarnate. And the merriment waxed madder and faster as each hour brought forth new surprises and more beautiful inspirations.

Hidden musicians kept the blood pulsing to ever-new measures. The rude, barbaric drumming of tom-toms throbbed with a sort of dull ferocity that thrust back and back the swathing ceremones of civilization, loosing the primitive passions of dead days. Down in the city, those who labored slept and tossed, or panted in the fetid air of sweatshop or tenement. But here the favored of the world fed their jaded senses with all the seductive devices that wealth could summon and cunning evolve.

It was grand, splendid, and bad, and it was transcendently beautiful. From the heart of Mexican cactus had been distilled a syrup that filled the veins with the desert's fire; the volatile blood

of France boiled from the slender-necked bottle guarded in woven grasses; the mysticism of monastic exaltation welled in the slow, sweet thickness of Benedictine liqueurs. All the rare essences of the earth's fruits had been sought, to distill their magic and awake, for an hour poignantly sweet, dreams and desires that the pendulum of life daily wakes and kills—wakes and kills.

And the bacchanalian riot of the Prendergast fiesta found swift and sweeping answer in the silken-swathed and jeweled forms who ran and dipped and danced from light to dense shadow, and from shadow back to rose light and moonlight again.

To-night was, and to-morrow was not. To forget and to enjoy—this made up the sum of life. While we live, let us live—the Prendergast credo wrote itself in letters of flower flame and breathed in the warm incense of wines that made of this night a wondrous interval in the dead grayness of life—a thing of mild, sweet phantasy and dear delight.

The host had requested that even husbands and wives should not know each what the other would wear, and this stipulation had been regarded with appreciative delight. Consequently Susan Sloan, a slim and vividly lovely form as a dragon-fly, swept but an indifferent glance over a Dante whom the unknown harem favorite had stopped with a gay challenge. For Mrs. Prendergast's restless eyes had found what her secret bribes had discovered for her—the Dante her neighbor, Rodman Sloan, would impersonate. And her white, jewel-laden hand slid softly through the arm of the cloaked, loitering figure.

"Would you find your Beatrice, honored sir? May an unworthy butterfly show you the way?"

At the low, mischievous whisper, the

grave lips beneath Dante's gray silk mask smiled.

"Lead on, O gem of the seraglio!" he replied.

"Then down this privet path and through the grove to the sunken garden, where tosses the fairy fountain. There, as the midnight tolls, may we wish, and the gnomes that live under the lilies where the waters sleep will bring our wishes to pass. Come, O Dante!"

Down to the fairy beauty of the sunken gardens she led him and swirled her rainbow-hued draperies in a laughing pirouette as she sank to a curved Roman bench of stone and tucked one of its silk cushions behind her.

Her companion seated himself at her side and lifted his mask a trifle to let the cool night breeze fan his face. The day and its labor in his office had been long and hard, and he was weary—with the weariness that finds it difficult to call up the inner springs of gay nonsense expected for the hour of play.

The cool quiet was healing after the bizarre strumming of strange instruments meant to disturb and quicken the pulses, and he closed his eyes thankfully as the bending branches of the trees whispered their low "Hush, hush!" and the diaphanous mist of the fountain floated like small vagrant ghosts around him.

"Remove your mask, Sir Dante! You are known, so you may as well be comfortable."

The low, laughing whisper had changed to her natural tones, and she whipped the small strip of satin from her own face with a little sigh of relief.

"They are stuffy things. And all this"—she threw out her hands with a comprehensive gesture that took in the stretch of moonlit, drowsing gardens—"is better than that mad carmagnole back there, isn't it?"

"Do we bore you, fair hostess?" murmured Sloan sadly.

"Of course you do, collectively. Don't be bromidic, Rod! You know you are bored to extinction yourself and would rather be at home with a good book. We go through this deadly round, whipping ourselves with noise and wine to try to make ourselves believe that we are enjoying ourselves madly—and we spin like a lot of wired marionettes and cut our old capers in new forms and pretend we like it."

"But don't?"

"Of course we don't!" impatiently. "We couldn't go through its empty pretense if we didn't drink a good deal more than is good for us. We drug our senses with wine to enjoy, then we drug them with chloral to sleep, and—next day pay the piper."

"And the doctor," agreed Sloan. "It's odd what hard work we do put in, chasing that bubble called pleasure."

"You don't, very much. You get out of a good deal on one pretext and another. And I wish—I wish——"

The jeweled bangles on her wrists slid together with a musical clash as she brought her hands together with a sudden, desperate gesture and leaned forward to stare down into the sleeping waters at their feet.

"You wish? Why, I thought all your wishes were granted before they were formed, you most fortunate of women!" he said, a note of surprise in his voice.

"Yes, because all our life is a *bal masqué*," she answered wearily. "I've had ten years of the Somerset high speed with a 'prince of good fellows,' and none of you has the faintest idea that again and again I've tried to check it and get something else out of life besides tame and deadly tedious buffoonery. I've envied you and Susan because you've kept out of the vortex. You've lived, while we've dashed through the years like a lot of clowns swinging painted bladders. To-night

marks the tenth milestone, and it seemed to come over me—the hollow stupidity of it all—till I felt that I'd scream if I didn't get away from the crowd where I wouldn't have to act. What liars we all are, Rod Sloan! It's become smart to be rude, just because we're so sick of each other and of the treadmill that never gets us anywhere."

"My dear girl!" Rodman dropped a strong, quiet hand on the small ruinous fingers that were twisting a costly lace trifle into shreds. "You're tired out and your nerves are naked. Cut the whole thing for a while."

"I don't dare!" The pretty, sparkling face was now sullen, and she spoke dully. "Look what is all around us! Men and women sick of each other, separations, divorces, scandals, coarse dragging out of the family soiled linen for the jeering delectation of the public! I hate that sort of thing with an exquisitely dreadful hatred. It outrages every instinct of dignity. It makes us the common jest of our servants, of vulgarians who envy us and who would like to see us in tumbrils while they shriek their insults, as they did in France. It's not the canaille who are pulling us down now—we're doing it ourselves, with our brainless, feverish, blind extravagances and folly."

Sloan's face was grim as he, too, stared down into the limpid sheet of water, across which the slim plume of mist in the center threw its fine shimmer. She envied Susan and him! Susan's lovely, dissatisfied face rose before him—the girl who had married him ten years before and who now was as a stranger in the house. They had slowly drifted apart. Nothing had been said to make of that vague, formless shadow a concrete thing. But the shadow was there.

And this laughing butterfly at his side, she, too, had learned that the glories pass—the "*sic transit*" with which destiny rubs out the happy en-

thusiasms of youth with a rough hand. Prendergast, gay and debonair, must be humored in his pagan love of life, or their ship, too, would go on the rocks.

And so she laughed with painted lips and danced with leaden feet and wore her mask bravely the fifty-two weeks annually.

Sloan laughed suddenly—a laugh not good to hear—and rose to his feet. Stooping, he lifted her by her two elbows and held her aloft as easily as if she were a child, laughed again, then set her gently down.

"Tention, company! It's all mixed doin's, this war we call life, honey! But let's go on with the fight doggedly and trust there are Powers somewhere who know what it's all for. Buck up, old man! What's the odds?"

The woman beside him clung to his arm for a desperate moment, her raised face white in the moonlight, in her eyes the danger flame of long protest.

"Rod!"

The whisper reached up to him, as reach arms that twine and cling, and Sloan looked down at her for a long moment, while his face, too, went white. Then he drew a long, difficult breath and gathered the small, fierce hands into his. And he smiled down at her—a smile that was very tender, very weary and sad.

"Come, mavourneen. That way madness lies!"

Her head fell forward till her lips rested against his sleeve, and they stood silently while the ghostly mist of the fountain swayed in soft filaments toward them and the heavy sweetness of innumerable roses made the night air lovely.

Then she lifted her head and said tonelessly:

"Yes, I know. Let's go back."

Mrs. Davenant, who did not care for that sort of thing, had not attended the Prendergast *bal masqué* and had re-

turned to the city the day before. And it was the day after that she was summoned back again to Somerset.

Prendergast, it seemed, had hailed Sloan on the way to the train and insisted that he get out of his own car to help Prendergast try out the new one before they went into town.

Perhaps it was the after effects of the ball, or something unfamiliar in the mechanism of the car, or the speed madness for which Prendergast was noted—perhaps all three. But the too familiar happened, and when the crash came at “the devil’s curve,” they were pinned under the car and killed instantly.

After a visit of the family lawyer, a week later, Mrs. Davenant shoved aside the tea wagon, from which the legal luminary had been refreshed before he bowed himself away, and looked at her niece reflectively.

“The last act frequently presents surprises, doesn’t it? Hugh Prendergast was the proverbial ‘prince of good fellows,’ splendidly liberal, lavishly generous, lordly as to tips. He wanted the best in, and for, his house, and his guest chambers were usually occupied. His admirers did not reflect, however, that the princely reputation is a costly one. It’s easy to be generous. It’s delightful to sign checks in the sunlight of admiring smiles—it’s so unpleasant and stupid to say ‘no.’ So Pren didn’t say it, and he was popular, and he had a delightful life and went out of it with a laugh, as he would have wished. He denied neither his friends nor himself anything within reach of his check book, and the kindly fate that presided over his destiny spared him the inevitable accounting, with the rheumatic joints, of old age. He lived, and he died, laughing. And Bee is a beggar.”

Trailing her black draperies over to a deeply carved mahogany secretary, she picked up a small morocco frame and looked down into the grave eyes

that looked steadily back at her. There was a dimness in her own eyes for a little, but she tightened her lips till it cleared.

“Rod wasn’t the spectacular kind. When his office people came over here in a body, and his janitor sat down and cried fluently into his Sunday hat, and that cub of an office boy came over with his mother, the char-lady, and frankly bawled while she told how Rod carried the whole family last winter when her husband broke his leg and the cub had a cold in his ‘bronical toobes,’ of course it was news to us. We knew Rod was the kind that would be expected to do the decent thing, but he had not put himself out to draw our attention to the fact. And there was no particular fanfare of trumpets when Mr. Kimberley explained to-day in a matter-of-course way that you would have about three hundred a month to live on.”

Mrs. Davenant looked out of the window to where the gables of the Anne Hathaway cottage showed through the trees.

“Bee has a few relations who already look apprehensive and hold forth with passionate bitterness upon the criminal heedlessness of married men who don’t insure their lives, and casually touch upon how difficult it is under present conditions to meet one’s own immediate obligations.”

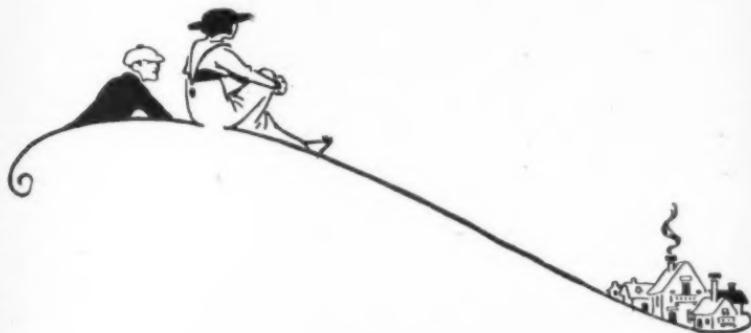
The thin, wise lips pursed thoughtfully and the pleasantly even little monologue went on.

“Bee is about as valuable to a productive and efficiency-frantic universe as that butterfly out there. She’s not only penniless, but in debt. When she makes her exit from this particular vale of luxury and is no longer among those present, the club colony of Somerset will exclaim feelingly, ‘Poor, dear Mrs. Pren!’—and forget her in a week. Our friendships are not as deep as a well, and we insist upon being fed.”

Turning from the window, she looked down again at the little framed picture.

"While Bee is engaged in the joyous pastime of earning a living, you will be enabled to conduct yourself like a perfect lady. Rod made provision for that. He wasn't a prince—only a pretty decent sort."

A choked sound came from Mrs. Sloan, as she sat with her head bowed on her arms, but her aunt did not turn. She lifted the little picture to her breast and held it there. And she stared out at the trees with eyes that did not see them—eyes heavy with the bitter loneliness and dumb grief of old age.



A VOICE AT MORNING

BEYOND the great frontiers of dawn,
I heard the singing of a bird.
O fluted eloquence! O word
That from the harps of heaven was drawn!

What rapture to the gates of light
You brought when the last stars grew pale!
Were you a lonely nightingale,
Blown down the windy wastes of white?

Or were you some ecstatic dream
A child had dreamed and tossed aside?
You floated on the ether's tide
As bubbles float upon a stream.

You reached my heart at last. You bore
A message from the distant spheres;
You were a silver sound, like tears
Shed by the saints or sad Lenore.

You were the gospel of the day,
The frozen wonder of the dawn.
O lovely bird, sing on, sing on!
Alas, all beauty fades away!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.



Magic Life

By May Edginton

Author of "The Woman Who Broke the Rule,"
"He That Is Without Sin," etc.



CHAPTER XVI.

CHASE was elated beyond dreams. Yet he was not surprised, secure in what he thought he knew of women. Of course she had meant to surrender. It had been a strain, though, a big tug against the driving power of such a nature as his, to wait like this, supplicating. When she said, "I'll marry you in a month from now," he kept silence for a moment or two, bending over her closely as she sat on the little divan, scrutinizing her white face and the little secret pink lips.

"She means it, this time?" he asked himself.

He could not get her to look at him. She sipped her brandy and soda and remained passive. Then, all at once, he threw his arms about her and kissed her jubilantly on the mouth. His face flushed deeper, from hair roots to jowl.

"You mean that?" he asked.

"I mean it."

"I'll jolly well see you don't change that versatile little mind of yours any more!" He sat down, close against her. "You better now?"

"Better, thanks. I—I felt faint."

"What had you been doing?" he asked, taking the empty glass from her.

"Oh, just—a theater, and supper at the club. I—I had tickets for the Ambassadors—that new piece, you know."

"Whom did you go with?"

"Why?" she said willfully.

"I want to know."

"Then you don't deserve to be told."

She looked around at him across her shoulder, a queer gleam in her eyes. "I'm not married to you yet, Willie."

"And until a month from to-day, any curiosity on my part about what you do is quite indecent, eh?"

"You mustn't dictate to me yet."

"May I after we're married, then?"

"It's not a question of 'may' or 'mayn't.' I know you will," she said, very low. He saw her breast heave under the impalpable evening gown.

"Well, I'm made that way," said Willie, playing with her fingers, one by one.

She sat still for a long while, it seemed to her, bearing his caresses, till Mrs. Abbott's footfall could be heard ascending the stairs, and he sprang up to open the door.

"Mother-in-law!" he called joyfully.

She came in, graceful, effacing. She said:

"Willie, it's after twelve. Please, will you go home?"

Her manner was full of playful rebuke; she put her two hands on his arms and stood shaking her head at him.

"In a minute," he replied. "First, I must tell you that we are being married in a month. The announcement

was sprung upon me shamelessly.
Shamelessly!"

He was full of his chuckling laughter, like a great, wise, wicked boy.

"Oh!" Mrs. Abbott gasped cooingly. She peered round his burly form to the girl sitting on the divan.

"Mother," said Nance, rising, "I'm going to bed. Good night, Willie. You ought to have gone away long ago."

She gave him, as she passed, just the tips of her fingers, which he kissed.

Lover and mother stood looking after the girl as she went languidly through the doorway; they watched her while she disappeared up the next flight of stairs. Then Willie said, pleased, but grumbling:

"She doesn't give much away. She's a riddle."

"Not to you," said Mrs. Abbott, pouting.

As she knew it would, that pleased him, in spite of his wisdom and his clear and cynical sight. His man's vanity was like a stomach, wanting, at its regular hours, food. He kissed the lady's hand, as he had kissed her daughter's, and walked out, laughing, saying:

"You credit me with knowing too much. I'm as wax in your hands—all of you."

She stood at the stairhead, knowing, in her woman's mind, that, in spite of his ease, his brain was fuddling with a question that he wanted very much to ask before he went. And, sure enough, as she stood there repeating her light farewells, he stopped and turned, looking up with a hand on the banister.

"I say, whom was she with tonight?"

"I'm not quite sure. Girls don't bother to tell their mothers these things. But I expect it was, Charles Seaton."

"Why should you 'expect' it?"

"Oh-h-h—" she said with a second pout, shrugging her shoulders.

"Off to France soon?" said Willie, after hesitation, and referring to Seaton.

"Any time, after this course is finished."

"When's that?"

"In a day or two."

"And, equally of course, he may stay in England for some months yet?"

"I believe not," said Mrs. Abbott. "He's so anxious to go. He has asked to be sent." She sighed and added, "I shall miss him."

"And Nance?" Willie muttered.

"Oh, you're jealous!" said Mrs. Abbott. "You're silly! Go away!" She did not answer him.

He turned to go obediently, with a grin. But while he was still descending the stairs, a taxicab pulled up outside, and the doorbell rang sharply.

"Willie dear," said Mrs. Abbott, bending over the balustrade to him, "Bentley will have gone to bed. Would you mind—"

When Chase opened the door, Seaton stood framed against the moonlight without.

"Hello!" said Chase.

"Hello!" said the soldier.

And for a moment they stood and looked each other up and down.

Mrs. Abbott was with them immediately, between them, gushing:

"Oh, Charles! You naughty boy! Why aren't you in bed?"

Seaton held a handful of small muslin handkerchief, purse, and powder puff.

"Miss Abbott dropped these in the cab, and when I saw them, I turned back and brought them at once. A purse, you see— Perhaps she was worrying."

Mrs. Abbott took the things, with purs and protests as to their utter immateriality. But Seaton and Chase

were still standing square, looking full at each other.

"Miss Abbott was good enough to ask me to use one of two stalls to-night," said Seaton easily. "I hope you don't mind, Chase?"

"Mind?" said Willie. "Not at all."

"Thanks. I mustn't keep you. Good night, Mrs. Abbott."

"Here!" said Willie. "Wait!" His eyes gleamed. "Give me a lift, will you? I haven't my car to-night."

"Pleasure."

Mrs. Abbott withdrew into the hall and warmed her foot at the dying fire. She watched the two men, and, as Willie got into his overcoat, beckoned to Seaton to join her. He came in impassively.

All pur, she said—for she was going, for reasons too uncomfortable for her to admit, to give this young man a piece of news herself, before Willie's triumphant detailing of it could take place in the cab:

"It's all decided now."

"What is decided?"

"I'm stupid! Being a mother, there's only one thing in my heart just now. I mean, of course, the wedding."

Willie joined them, trenchant, alert.

"Within a month from now," he stated.

Seaton leaned an arm on the mantelpiece. His big, booted foot rested on the curb; his short, double-breasted overcoat made his tall figure appear massive. He dwarfed even Willie's bull strength.

"Indeed?" he said. "Miss Abbott did not tell me."

"It was only arranged after she got home," said Willie candidly.

Willie kept the keenest of his perceptions for women, but Margot Abbott, watching like a lynx, instinct with knowledge of men, felt the change in the young soldier. She sniffed the hot blood, the hostile fury, the natural war

of brute on brute. And she thought restlessly:

"These days, how elemental men are! How reckless! What mightn't he do?"

Suddenly she washed her hands of them both. She said, yawning:

"Oh, go away! I do—oh, I do want my bed!"

But she stood there, warming her foot at the futile embers, till the door was shut and the cab had driven away again, with the two men inside.

It was a movement, a breath, a rustle above her that made her first look up.

She saw her girl leaning out over the balustrade, staring down into the hall as if transfixed in that attitude. Her head and shoulders emerged, shining, from the duskiness of the landing above.

"Nance!" said her mother, without moving.

Nance replied, not moving, either:

"That was Charles Seaton!"

"What of it?" said Mrs. Abbott.

"What did he want, mother?" the girl cried.

Then Mrs. Abbott picked up the trifles from the mantelshelf where they had been dropped and displayed them, with an effort at giving a ludicrous turn to the mutual tensity.

"He brought these, which you had dropped in the cab."

Nance darted down the stairs and clutched at the handful.

The older woman said coldly:

"We had better both go to bed."

"I'm going. But did Willie tell him?"

"About the wedding being fixed? Certainly."

"What did he say?"

"He showed very little interest," said Mrs. Abbott, passing her daughter to ascend the stairs. "His head is full of France, of course."

Slowly Nance followed her mother

upstairs. Mrs. Abbott's door was reached first. Here she paused to kiss her girl and utter a perfunctory "Good night." Nance, locking herself in her room, threw herself, dressed, upon her bed, tearless, comatose.

Here and thus, to her own morning amazement eight hours later, she slept heavily and dreamlessly.

She breakfasted in bed, having undressed at seven in the morning and crept back between the sheets. Unwilling to face her world, she lay there, still wondering.

While she was still there, Willie drove himself over to Regent's Park. He had come to take her for a morning spin, and lunch, if she wished it, out in the country. He meant, furthermore, to discuss plans and nail her intentions down to a date, promptly to be announced in the newspapers. It was Leila who received him in the green-and-amber room, where she rose from the letters she had been tapping out on a tiny typewriter. She smiled on him serenely, and as if she were thinking of other things. After she had sent the housemaid up to inform Miss Abbott of Mr. Chase's arrival, she sat down to entertain him.

She didn't say, "Do you mind if I go on with my letters?" as a dutiful hireling should. She didn't wish to go on with them. She said, almost at once, before he could begin to tell her, as she saw he intended to do:

"Mrs. Abbott told me, before she went out, that the wedding is fixed. I am so glad!"

"Why are you glad?" he asked, studying her.

He smiled slightly. She wasn't glad, of course. No woman could be glad to see another pass to her triumph. In his estimation, a wedding day, with a wealthy and quite a good sort of bridegroom, was a triumph that any daughter of Eve should pray for. But Leila

evaded him with pretty generalities sincerely spoken.

"One is always glad at a wedding. It means, surely, that two people are going to be very happy. And when one is very fond indeed of one of the two people, how can one help feeling pleased?"

"I say," said Chase, "which of the two people is it?"

"It's quite unnecessary to say that I meant Miss Abbott."

"I wonder how you think of me."

She smiled without replying, and turned toward her typewriter meditatively. He implored:

"Don't start that infernal clicker again, there's a dear girl!"

"Would you like me to go up and see if Miss Abbott is getting up? I think perhaps I'd better."

"It's very kind of you," said Willie, opening the door for her. "Will you tell her I want to run her into the country for lunch?"

She ran up, poised on ankles that were both slender and springy, to Nance's room, knowing once more that he watched her. Finding Nance still in the initial stage of dressing, she asked:

"Can't I help you? Shall I brush your hair?"

"There's no hurry about anything, is there?"

"Mr. Chase has called."

"So I've been told."

"And he wants to drive you into the country for lunch."

"I shan't go," said Nance. "I'm not going to spend a whole day with him in the car. Please tell him so. But say—say—" Leila waited, and she added: "Say I'll come down to see him quite soon. I shan't be long." She proceeded listlessly with her dressing.

Again Leila joined Willie in the green-and-amber room. He was walking about, hands in pockets, rather thoughtful and patient, with one of

Mrs. Abbott's extremely good cigarettes between his lips.

"Well?" he said, turning.

Leila closed the door.

"Miss Abbott doesn't wish to drive into the country to-day. But it won't be long before she comes down, if you'll wait, please."

"Oh, I'll wait!" he said peculiarly. He walked over to the window and stared out, hands in pockets. His back expressed the anger of a balked man who hated to be balked even in small things.

Leila took her seat at the desk and read letters.

Quite soon, as she knew she would, she heard him behind her, and he was leaning near, an elbow on the desk top.

"What are *you* going to do to-day?" he inquired in a brisker tone.

"The usual things."

"Lunch 'at the stores?'" His eyes twinkled. A faint chuckle entered his voice. "Why shouldn't *you* come?" he demanded. "The car's ready—I'm ready. Nance has got no use for either of us to-day. I want some one—some one with sense and"—he surveyed her—"well, with all you've got, to talk to. I'm busting to talk to some one to-day. Where'll I pick you up, please?"

The girl thought much in a small space of time.

"I don't really think I could, Mr. Chase."

"Why not? Why, I should like to know? You'd like it?"

"Naturally I'd like a few hours' mousing. It doesn't often come my way."

"And *I'd* like it. That goes without saying."

"I mustn't do it," said Leila, digging holes in the blotting paper with a pencil point.

"Please!" he urged. "I'll wait and see Nance. You'll go out 'shopping.' I'll meet you, pick you up, and we'll

have a jolly time somewhere. By Jove, why shouldn't we?"

Smiling, he looked at her. Suddenly smiling, she looked at him. Then a small noise at the door made them start. It had opened quietly, and Nance was standing there.

"Hello, darling!" said Chase, advancing.

Leila bent over her typewriter, inserting a sheet.

Nance met Chase without so much as a glance at the other girl.

"So you won't come out?" Chase complained.

She said: "I've changed my mind. I'm just going back to put on my hat—get a coat. I'd adore a run into the country this morning."

For a second Chase stared; then he laughed deeply. Nance went out, holding the door and watching her up the stairs. Then he came back a step or two into the room and looked at Leila. Her head was bent; he saw that the slow color had covered even the strong nape of her neck. Viciously she rattled on the keys.

"You women!" he said.

She did not look around, but continued her work with speed and precision. And soon she heard him go out, saying, "Oh, that awful clack!" He waited about the doorway for Nance, and in a short while she joined him. Leila rose and peered over the half blind to watch the lovers drive away.

"She heard!" she thought to herself. "She's angry! She's jealous!" Soothing to her vanity came the reflective question, "Can she be afraid of me?"

All morning she shopped; all the afternoon she darned house linen finely in a little odd room near the top of the house. Here, about five o'clock, Nance came to her and, finding her ensconced—and not willing to move—in the one basket chair, perched herself upon the edge of the table.

"So you're back?" said Leila, not raising eyes from her darning.

"As you see," Nance uttered coldly.

For a few moments the two girls were quiet, Leila's needle threading in and out with a delicate industry. The gray light of a failing autumn afternoon dropped mistily through the opened window.

As Leila would not speak, Nance did.

"You are quite aware," she said, "that I am going to marry Mr. Chase."

"In a month," Leila murmured indifferently.

"Do you think," Nance said, "that it is suitable for you to receive invitations from him?"

Leila smiled a little over her work; and from a frost, Nance became an iceberg.

"I think it very unsuitable for Mr. Chase to give them," said Leila. "In my position, I have to take such offers—and refuse them—as tactfully as I can. I don't think any one can expect more of me."

"You infer that Mr. Chase pesters you?"

"I really do not wish to infer anything so untrue and disagreeable," Leila answered with dignity.

For a little while the other girl leaned silently against the table edge, closing and unclosing her nervous hands upon it.

"Have you ever lunched out with him?" she burst out.

"Once," said Leila, with a haughty candor. "That day I took a note for you, to be left at the Carlton. I lost the note—I am sorry—and had to wait for Mr. Chase. He could really do no less than offer me lunch."

"You think so? Then you are mistaking your position here entirely!"

Leila rose, moving toward the door. "And you're abusing it, Miss Abbott."

In a moment, before the other could

reach the door, shame prevailed over Nance's anger. She was quarreling over a man! Arguing, fighting, biting—because of the favors of a man! In arms against herself, she cried impetuously:

"Oh, forgive me, Leila, but——"

Leila stopped as if placated, and surveyed her.

"Surely," she said with her effect of frank humility, "you need not be jealous of any one."

"I've been so worried, I don't know how I feel."

"Has that woman been persecuting you?"

"Wh-what woman?"

"That hairdresser, Chrysa Andersen?"

Nance pressed the back of her clenched hand swiftly upon her lips. They must not speak! But her eyes betrayed her.

"What do you mean—about Chrysa Andersen?" she faltered.

"She has talked to me."

"She had no right to! I paid her not to——"

"She said so. But I think she talked only to pump me."

"There's nothing for either of you—for any one—to know. I was a fool—mad—to give her the money! I didn't think what I was doing."

"She took it as an admission."

"An admission of what?" said Nance, with a simulated indignation that gave the effect of stealth.

"You don't suppose I asked!"

"Leila," said Nance wretchedly, "you must hate me. I'm suspicious, unjust. But I feel just now as if I'm in danger of losing my whole world. I've lost so much——"

She went away with a working face, and Leila remained behind unmoved. As her needle worked in and out, she repeated to herself, though:

"You are mistaking your position here entirely—your position here——"

She walked up and down the little room, thinking.

Dusk had fallen when the page bounded up the stairs and opened the door.

"Miss," he said with a smile, "I'm going out on errands for the mistress. Is there anything you want done?"

She suddenly scribbled in pencil a little note, while he stood waiting. It was to Seaton, and she wrote:

DEAR MR. SEATON: I have to leave here as soon as possible. I cannot stay any longer, and I want to be of direct use in the world, in the war. I want you to tell me as soon as you can just what you think, from your observation, is the best way in which a woman can offer herself now. Yours sincerely,

L. DORSON.

She handed the page a shilling with the note.

"Get that sent at once from a district-messenger office," she said.

He read the address, she watching him. He said nothing, but his eyes danced.

He replied, "Certainly, miss," and went away.

Leila was doing the table decorations, for there was a dinner party to-night, when she was called to the telephone by Sanders, the parlor maid.

"Some one wishes to speak to you, miss," said the maid confidentially.

She smiled at Leila. Bentley, the page, had shown her the address on the young housekeeper's letter.

In a moment or two, Leila was speaking to Seaton himself.

"Thank you for your note," he said. "It interested me immensely. This is the way women need to get to work just now. Shall I write to you or come and talk to you? Which?"

She replied: "Letters are such a cumbersome way of discussing things. I feel I want to decide something now, to-night. But you can't come here. For one thing, there is a party to-night. For another——"

"For another? Yes?"

"Well, you know."

"Would you care to meet me somewhere, then?"

Leila smiled while she threw gratitude, surprise, and hesitation into her voice.

"It's very kind of you, if you can spare the time. I don't want to waste your time."

"Rot about wasting my time! Yours is of value, too. Will you meet me at Pagani's? That is pretty handy for you."

"Pagani's, at eight? Thank you. Au revoir."

As she hung up the receiver, Sanders passed out from the dining room, smiling sympathetically.

"I hope you will have a very nice evening, miss."

Looking after the girl, Leila had fellowship in her feeling. She, the house-keeper, and Sanders, the parlor maid—they were not so unlike in their circumstances and opportunities. Each, to meet a young man, must go out into the crowded town. Not for them snug intimacy, quiet privacy, of green-and-amber rooms. Nor could they meet him in the amenities of such a dinner table as just now they had been decking. They must go out into the crowd. They were waifs without dignity, following the romantic star.

She finished all her work with dispatch, and met Seaton at Pagani's at eight.

She had a coat and skirt, and a little quiet hat, and looked the woman of business, but with the appeal of fresh youth. And she knew, by his look, that he approved her, admired her quietly for cutting her path alone through the rocky world. He was kindly, solicitous in the ordering of dinner. She was impatient, though she did not show it, for the first services to be over, that she might begin.

After all, he began, helping her:

"You look very, very serious tonight."

"I am very, very serious." And, smiling at him, with her chin up, she added: "I've lost my job."

The young man was grave instantly, sympathetic and the least trifle embarrassed. He didn't want openly to pity so courageous a girl, yet pity her he did from the bottom of his heart. He thought:

"She doesn't want me to condole, wouldn't like it."

"You're giving up your job?" he said at last.

"Actually, I believe I can put it like that."

"I think it is a good thing, in the social interests. I mean, surely an idle woman can order her own house. And you—you can do something very much more worth while."

"Yes, yes." But she wanted, and meant, of course, to tell him everything connected with the probable giving up of her position, because it was a story that would appeal to a man, make a man think:

"What a darned shame! What injustice a nice girl on her own must endure!"

So she went on:

"It isn't that I so much mind going, but the particular reason for it—"

She swallowed hard, and a genuine flush rose in her face as she remembered again: "You are mistaking your position entirely."

"I'm feeling so sore!" she said. "So angry! It's such an ordinary little contretemps that the telling will bore you, but I am so angry that I want to tell some one."

"Really, I appreciate it that you feel you can tell me."

"Oh, it's such an ordinary story! The kind of story every girl earning her own living can tell a hundred times over! I've tried, you know—to efface myself, not to speak—lest I'm spoken

to, a horrible sin in the eyes of employers! But, of course, in a way, people who come to the house always regard a girl like me as fair game."

Seaton nodded. She hurried on:

"Of course, you—you know, I mean men when I say 'people.'"

"Yes," he said. "What a shame!"

She told him the episode of the lost note and the Pall Mall lunch. Embroidering Willie's perfunctory attentions skillfully enough, she passed on to the incident of the morning.

"It's so ordinary," she apologized, "it's hardly worth telling. It's the sort of thing, of course, that one experiences a hundred times. One gets hardened to all sorts of things. Really, it's scarcely worth telling at all."

But she told it, to its end; garnished a little here and there where it was weakest; till what she had said and what she hadn't said, together, made a little tale that gave the young soldier's mouth a firmer set and brought a steady shine to his eyes.

He envisioned Chase as he had seen him the night before, standing in the hall, gloating somewhat too openly over the nearness of his approaching marriage, bull-necked, red-faced, overindulged. And quickly there rose before his eyes, before he could dash it away, the vision of the other contracting party to this union. So slim, so pale, pure, and soft the girl stood in his mental sight that he struggled hard with a feeling, a sick, cold feeling, before he could crush it and listen again to Leila, who was saying:

"She was awfully angry. You know how fond I am of her. She is so sweet. But she accused me—and she taunted me. I suppose she was right to do it if she really believed— But it rankled badly. When one knows that everything one has done and said and thought has been immaculate, it does rankle. I couldn't argue. I just lis-

tened. She said I was mistaking my position entirely."

Seaton smiled.

"It takes a woman," he said. "In the case of men, one good fellow doesn't insult another good fellow. By Jove!" He sat and thought.

"You quite see I can't stay there?"

"Oh, it's impossible. It's no wonder you want to get away—and quickly!"

"Thank you. We won't speak of it any more. I shall go away, after the usual term of notice. But now you're going to tell me what I ought to do."

"What do you want to do?"

"I'm qualified for nothing at all."

"By Jove! That's a stumblingblock. Because it'll make everything seem such drudgery. You'll have to take some entirely unskilled job, you see, and work up."

"I'm not afraid of anything."

"How splendid you are!"

Her eyes regarded him speculatively; they were so deep and grave that they caught his earnest attention. Her mouth and chin were strong; her neck, her hands were strong. She was a woman full of power. For a moment he found himself leaning to her in spirit, groping out to see if she had anything to give. She felt this, and she smiled at him her smile that seemed to have all the deeps in it, and she asked, low:

"Yes? What is it?"

Her words were like an answer to some question he had thought, but had not asked. So far he had hardly thought it, but now he began to search, to clothe it.

"There's been one thing," he said, meeting her, "that I've been very much afraid of. I've been afraid that all women are light, base, rotten at the core, without heart to risk anything, least of all themselves. So it has helped me to meet you."

"I—I'm glad."

"It has partly restored my balance about women."

"You've been hurt."

"Can you see it?" he said, wincing. "Surely I've no scar."

"Forgive me. A girl who goes through life as I have—"

"That's it. You understand. You've learned how, if you weren't born with the instinct. Yes, you help me."

"And I asked you to help me!"

"Perhaps we shall help each other."

Leila's heart beat thick as she sat there, eyes now downcast, lips pressed. Seaton's own words suggested to him others. He said, very slowly:

"One does things swiftly nowadays. It's the only way. There may be so little time. One never knows."

He looked at her—quiet, brave, and reliant, the woman for the times.

"Fools don't help a man much these days," he said, and smiled.

He stretched out a hand and laid it on hers. They had a corner table, a little withdrawn.

"Leila," he said, "you want some work to do. Will you marry me?"

She gasped, so real was her astonishment at the quick culmination of the thing she had been, perhaps, working toward.

"Why? Why ask *me*?"

"Because you are brave and true and strong."

"You don't say you—"

"Love you? I will love you, and you'll love me some day. I ask you just this: Will you marry me? I think I'd like to go out there leaving behind me one woman who decently cared."

She had not replied.

He went on:

"You'd be provided for. I'd like that thought, too. You, a woman who works her way and holds up her head and keeps her hands and heart clean always—I'd like the thought that I'd

left you all I have, given you all I am, if——”

“Oh, don’t!”

“Well, it’s a pretty definite ‘if.’ I’d rather have you for my widow than any other woman I know for my wife. Put it like that. Now, Leila, be brave enough to answer.”

She looked him in the face and replied softly:

“I’ll marry you.”

He pressed her hand.

“Trust me,” he said. “We’re both lonely people. We’re both, apparently, been knocked pretty hard, at times. Trust me, though.”

She knew that he had no passion for her. Her own heart was full of gratification, relief, and a hot, tingling sensation of triumph. And she was thinking subconsciously, “It’s all over—the hardships, the servility. I shall be a rich man’s wife.” Returning his look, she knew, also, that she, or any other woman, might trust this man till death.

“I’ll be good to him,” she thought with a flash of justice, almost of compunction.

Leila reentered the house at Regent’s Park at ten-thirty. She heard the voices of dinner guests behind the drawing-room door, speaking fragmentarily, intermittently, with long spaces of silence. They were probably playing bridge in there. Sanders, the parlour maid, crossed the hall.

“I hope you have had a pleasant evening, miss,” said the girl, smiling with a hint of conspiracy.

“There is no conspiracy, no subterfuge, any longer, about me,” Leila thought with a little swell of elation in her breast. Looking at the maid full, she replied, “Thank you,” and added, for she wanted the whole household to know as soon as might be, “I am engaged to be married, Sanders.”

“Oh, miss! I’m sure I congratulate you. May I tell Bentley, miss?”

“No,” said Leila, “but you’ll tell him all the same.”

She was on good terms with the Abbott servants. She laughed.

“Well, miss, it’s so hard to keep an engagement secret, miss. Is it—Mr. Thompson or Mr. Seaton, please, miss?”

“They know everything,” Leila mused, recalling the one occasion when the youthful Mr. Thompson had entertained her at tea at the Criterion. “How do they do it?”

“It’s Mr. Seaton, of course, Sanders,” she said aloud.

“Thank you, miss,” said the maid roguishly, disappearing to the back regions.

Leila went up to her cold, small bedroom and lighted the one gas jet. In her desire for prettiness, she had hung over its bald white globe a square of rose-red silk, to give her room a cozy light, such as the other women’s rooms had. Under this kind glow, she regarded herself in the mirror, taking off her hat and ruffling up her crushed hair.

She was handsome, lambent with her victory. Her face had already softened as if by miracle. It had even now lost its questing look; a look that had sometimes—and she knew it—repelled men before she could quickly veil it.

“Not much more of *this!*” she said to herself, casting a contemptuous look around the room.

Setting the door ajar, she lingered about, listening for the departure of guests. They left about eleven, and she heard their chatter receding down the stairs. There sounded to her up the well of the staircase Bentley’s respectful “Good night, sir. Good night, m’lady.” And then he gently closed the front door.

She ran down to the first floor and opened the drawing-room door.

The three of them were there—Colo-

nel Abbott talking to Nance, and Mrs. Abbott gathering together, with her keen sense of economy, her bridge markers. All three turned to look at the intruder, who stood on the threshold, incongruous in morning dress.

"Well?" said Mrs. Abbott crisply.

The lady meant nothing crude or harsh, nothing in the nature of a snub, but her sharp question, as to a rather ubiquitous dependent, braced Leila to a joyous hardihood, heartened her mightily. Preparing to taste a keen enjoyment, she stepped in quietly.

"May I speak to you a moment, please, Mrs. Abbott?"

"To-night?"

"If you do not mind."

"Then speak here. You may consider me alone."

"Thank you," said Leila. "I wanted to tell you—and I wanted it to date from to-night—that I must leave you in a month. I think that is the proper term of notice."

Colonel Abbott turned away, but his wife exclaimed instantly:

"Oh, how *extremely* vexing! You're not satisfied here? How *can* one please people nowadays?"

Nance, advancing a step, with a flush all over her white face, began:

"Oh, it is because—— But——"

Her mother looked askance at her, saying coldly:

"Is there a mystery? How silly!"

Leila answered with sweetness:

"Thank you, Miss Abbott. Please don't think that. Don't concern yourself. It is not because of anything you said, any mistake you made about me. But I am engaged to be married."

The three people took the announcement in different fashion, Abbott exclaiming jovially, "By George! That's always a nice piece of news, eh, Margot?" the women standing silent, looking at Leila.

Nance drew a long breath.

"Who is it?"

And Mrs. Abbott, regaining her pleasantness, echoed:

"Yes. Come, this is exciting! Who is it?"

"I am engaged to Mr. Seaton," Leila replied as pleasantly.

"To Seaton!" Abbott exclaimed, and over her head, involuntarily, he looked at his wife.

Leila saw the look.

"The insolence of these people!" she thought. "They think—they think he's a fool! I'm little better than a housemaid in their eyes." She regarded them remotely.

"You are engaged to Charles Seaton?" said Mrs. Abbott slowly. "How—how extraordinary!"

"'Extraordinary,' Mrs. Abbott?"

"Yes, extraordinary. You are such strangers. You must really tell us and satisfy our tremendous curiosity. Was it love at first sight?"

Nance made a funny little sound, at which Abbott looked at her sharply and moved nearer to his girl, with a puzzled frown cleft between his brows.

"Oh, how *can* I know?" said Leila, fluttering rather cleverly between depreciation and daring. "Yes, perhaps it was. I suppose it must have been."

"You—you had met him in the park—and—other places outside," Nance said suddenly, in a rather loud and labored voice.

"Met him in the park!" exclaimed Mrs. Abbott, reddening under her powder. And she looked her angry, unspoken thought: "What an impudent thing for my housekeeper to do! To meet one of my friends in the park!"

"Excellent strategy on Seaton's part," said Colonel Abbott gallantly. "I commend the—the—lucky fellow."

It seemed to him, indistinctly, that somehow his womankind were behaving a little like cads. The behavior of women to each other! And a fair game was a fair game. What was so wrong?

The girl—she wasn't such a bad sort. He began:

"I suppose he's going to rush you. A wedding before he goes out, eh? A war wedding, with the usual—"

He heard his girl utter in a faint, slipping voice:

"Father, I—I feel—awfully—"

He wheeled in time to catch her as she dropped forward, with a total collapse of every inch of her.

"My dear child!" Mrs. Abbott cried, springing forward.

"Stand away!" said Abbott in a dry voice. "She's fainted. Been overdoing it, of course." He said it firmly, protecting her, though a certainty, heavy and sorrowful, had fallen like a bullet into his brain. "Been rushing about, sitting up late— Absurd! Where's the—"

It was Leila, competent, sweet, who already had the brandy glass at the girl's icy lips.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. Abbott told Willie Chase next morning of the tiresome thing that had befallen. She telephoned him so early that he was yet in his bath, but she insisted that he should get out and speak to her personally.

He was plaintive at first.

"Dear mother-in-law, if you knew how cold I am! Just a Turkish towel wrapped round me and an infernal draft blowing. Wet and miserable and cold, not for you or any one else can I converse amiably."

"Nance is quite ill," Mrs. Abbott replied.

"Nance—ill!"

"She fainted last night and is going to stay in bed this morning."

"Why did she faint?"

"How do I know?" said Mrs. Abbott, after a hesitation that Willie read like an open page.

"Right!" he exclaimed in a hurry.

"I'll be round in an hour if I may, to inquire."

When he came, with flowers in one hand and a box of super-bonbons in the other, Mrs. Abbott received him in the green-and-amber room. She kissed him on both cheeks, for he was, of course, so soon to become her son-in-law, and she was a woman who kissed easily.

She sat on the divan, brooding a little, effectively.

"Isn't life tiresome?" she exclaimed.

"It's a good old game," said Willie. "But some people, women especially, can't bear to lose. Is that it? Have you lost a point?"

"Oh, at my age," she said deceitfully, "what do points matter?"

"They matter fiercely. They matter more 'n' more till you're seventy."

"What a horrible reflection!" said the lady. "Is there no peace?"

Willie knew the kind of reply she liked, and made it.

"Do you expect to be given peace?" he said. "You're too attractive, mother-in-law."

Irrelevantly, she exclaimed:

"Miss Dobson—my amanuensis—you've noticed her?"

"Just noticed her," said Willie without a twinkle.

"She's engaged to Charles Seaton."

"By God!" said Willie.

Mrs. Abbott intertwined her hands viciously.

Willie burst into a regardless laugh.

"Clever girl!" he said.

Mrs. Abbott looked at him with a faint and stony distaste.

"No wonder you're sick l!" said Chase.

"Willie!"

"You can't deceive me, mother-in-law. Why not realize it and be more confiding?"

"I have nothing to confide. After forty, one hasn't."

"It's your own fault, then."

"I assure you, if it were so, I would

be simply charged with secrets that I couldn't tell my husband."

"Has this feller Seaton got any money?" Willie asked.

"Quite a lot, I believe."

"Good thing!" said Willie, reflecting. "I've often thought that girl would take the shine out of half the women in town if she were decently dressed."

"You've 'often thought!'"

"Well, well," said Willie, "I've got eyes. The better to see you with, my dear," as the wolf said. I'm glad to have eyes, with the prospect of such a pretty mother-in-law."

"Oh, Willie! I'll never trust you again!" she said very petulantly.

He laughed, deep and chuckling. Beneath her still thick lashes she regarded him wisely. Then she took his hand.

"Tell me," she said, with a sigh, "is the girl really so attractive?"

How he laughed! She delighted him hugely, and he never minded letting her know it.

"Very," he nodded. "Ask Seaton."

"I suppose you think," said she, "that I mind this engagement."

"Don't you?"

Bentley came and announced:

"Sanders says Miss Nance wishes to see you for a moment, ma'am, if you could go up."

"Just a little minute," Mrs. Abbott said to Willie, pressing his hand affectionately. She went out with the walk of a girl, Bentley holding the door.

Bentley's eye had been on Willie, and he had caught his look. The page lingered a second, inquiring, and Willie beckoned, with a nod.

When the lad was close, he said casually, but in a low voice:

"I say, find Miss Dobson and send her here quickly, will you?"

And he sat on the divan, reflective, smiling, till, in the space of half a minute, the door opened to admit Leila, letters in hand. She hovered on the threshold, seeing Chase alone, but he

sprang up, drew her in, and closed the door very softly after her.

He kept her hand, looking into her face.

With admiration, tempered by amusement, he said:

"I have to congratulate you."

"Thank you," she answered demurely.

"You've taken us all by surprise," he said.

She stood there, grave and preoccupied, with the sheaf of letters.

"Won't you—er—sit down?" said Willie.

"Thank you, no. I came here expecting to find that Mrs. Abbott wanted me. Bentley didn't say who sent the message."

"Indeed?" said he, with levity. "What an excellent and conscientious girl you are! Do you always think of your duty? You will, by the way, soon be leaving it now, I suppose?"

"Very soon, to be married."

"Can't you show a pretty excitement over the prospect?"

Stagnant in her mind, yet ready to lift and move when time for action should be revealed, was an impression of herself as an angler, with two big fish in the stream, uncertain which to play and land.

"Why should I?" she replied.

Chase came closer and said, with an urgent look in his twinkling, keen eyes:

"Look here, I'm interested in people, women especially, and what you said the other day at lunch struck me, rather. I thought it was very—er—nice—fine and all that. You remember it? About liking to work—preferring it until the only man in the world came along? You didn't expect to find him so quickly, eh?"

After hesitation, which he marked as she meant him to, she answered:

"I didn't expect to find him quickly—no."

"But now you've found him?"

She made no reply. Her silence was effective; it seemed impressed by the unutterable things behind.

"Seaton is the right man?" Chase continued, reflecting, looking at her with a glance part scrutinizing, part chaffing.

She went toward the door slowly enough for him to have time to intercept her. He cast another look at her face, and saw her biting her lip hard.

"Are you doing it just to get away from this awful drone work, this infernal slavery?" he exclaimed.

"Why do you ask?" she replied reluctantly.

He put his hand on her wrist and said:

"Why, I admire you so—your pluck, your grit. I'd like to see you do the right thing for yourself. He's a good feller, I hope, eh?"

She snatched her hand away and put it behind her back. Willie liked that, somehow.

"Oh, I'm sorry," he said, smiling.

"I must go, Mr. Chase."

"Oh, why? Please don't! Wait a minute!" He was eying the traces of agitation which she was allowing to slip through the control of her face. "Something happened here," he guessed, "to make you make up your mind very quickly."

"Don't ask, please."

Now fully determined, primed to interest, he exclaimed:

"I will ask. I do ask. And I'm a despotic sort of chap, you know. Come, my dear girl, tell me."

"I can't tell you." She averted her eyes.

The manner of her reticence gave the man his clew.

"Look here!" He moved closer. "They haven't been saying anything to you about your lunching with me—all that? Eh? Have they?"

Her silence acquiesced.

"By Jove!" he cried. "What a

shame!" He cogitated! "So you're marrying and cutting it all! I don't blame you."

"Thank you!" she said cheekily. A dimple he had not suspected hovered in the round of her young cheek.

He laughed.

"I suppose your young man won't allow me to take you out any more?"

"Without consulting my young man, I think we may suppose Miss Abbott would bar it."

"Bar it? She told you so?"

Again Leila maintained her loyal and damning silence.

"You won't say! You won't give her away!" he cried admiringly.

He moved about the room a pace or two restlessly, hands in pockets. He was thinking, and thought ran, too, clear and lucid, in Leila's brain.

"Women who exact too much are fools," he stated at length. "Remember that, and it'll make you more or less happy."

"Thank you."

"Cheek!" he exclaimed, apprising the dimple again. He laughed.

"Women aren't only cats—they're cads," he began to soliloquize, resuming his limited pacing of the floor.

Leila went out quickly, for her quick ear had caught the fall of Mrs. Abbott's foot on the stairway above.

The lady entered, closed the door in a deliberate fashion, and interrogated Willie.

"Did that girl come in?"

"Who? Miss Dobson?" he said unblushingly. "Ah—she looked in just now—said she wanted you. She'd got some letters or something."

"Oh," said the lady, half mollified.

"She must be a useful girl. You'll be sorry to lose her."

"Shall I?" said Mrs. Abbott thoughtfully. She warmed a foot at the fire.

"How is Nance, mother-in-law?"

"She'll be down to see you soon. Take her for a run in the car."

"If she'll come."

"Willie," said Mrs. Abbott, "I would insist on her coming, were I in your place."

He laughed.

"No," he said, "I don't insist on anything from any woman, thank you."

"Why not?"

He turned a knowing eye upon her.

"Because no woman I've met yet, as far as I know, is worth the mental effort. If they don't want to give, let 'em keep."

"What a clever pose!" she cried, flurried and a little gushingly. "It makes women want to give, if they think you feel that way. How clever!"

"It's not a pose," he answered, sitting down to torment the sleeping pug.

She sat down beside him.

"Willie," she murmured, "you're spoiled."

"And you?"

"I'd better go to see about those letters, I suppose," she said, a little at a loss.

He opened the door for her, a quiet grin on his face, and went back to the pug and fire.

Mrs. Abbott ran down to the dining room, where she found Leila arranging table flowers.

"Good morning," said the lady with a brisk amiability which her eyes belied. "Mr. Chase is in my room just now. I'll do the letters here."

They sat down by the table.

"There's a heap of applications for those matinée tickets," said Leila, very industriously shuffling them, like a hand at cards.

"Remittances all inclosed, I hope?" murmured Mrs. Abbott languidly.

Her eyes, less languid than her voice, regarded sharply the top of the girl's brushed, waved, sleek brown head.

"Dangerous!" she said to herself. "Dangerous! Very! I wonder——"

While they sat by the table, one dictating, the other listening, Bentley came

in with a letter, which he laid at Leila's side.

"By special messenger, miss."

Not only Leila, but Mrs. Abbott, cast a side glance at the handwriting on that envelope, small, firm, and clear.

"I seem to know that writing," Mrs. Abbott observed with an acrid kind of archness.

"It is from Mr. Seaton," said Leila.

"You must long to read it," said Mrs. Abbott, very sweet. "But I'm afraid I must have this work finished without delay. Business first, you know."

"Certainly," said Leila.

For a long while the elder woman kept her there, unnecessarily arguing, unnecessarily commenting, directing, and discussing, while the letter lay unopened at her elbow.

Leila added in her mind another item to the bill which the Abbotts should pay.

But at last she was alone with Seaton's letter, and the other correspondence spread out all over the dining-room table. Mrs. Abbott had, perforce, to leave her, at length, which she did with a chilling jest about the love letter burning through its envelope with impatience.

Not till the door had shut finally behind her did the girl open that letter.

Seaton wrote:

MY DEAR LEILA: I want to tell you at once of some news which has just reached me. It is that in all probability I am going to lose the fortune which was left to me recently. I will explain to you as much as I can, if you like, dear girl, at the earliest opportunity, but I shall not be able to make everything clear to you, I'm afraid. You will have to take what I say on trust.

The point that worries me most is that you will be marrying a man with not a farthing beyond his second lieutenant's pay. That is small, as you know. I shall want to hear as soon as I can what you think about it, my dear. You are brave, I know. Will you write or telephone me? Yours,

CHARLES SEATON.

Leila sat a little while over that letter, reading it, weighing it. Then she laughed just a little.

"My fate!" said she. She looked before her, and a devil rose up, hot, within her. "Flouted!" she said. "Just that—flouted!"

She read the letter again. She thought to herself:

"He doesn't love me. There was no question of it, none. He doesn't love me, of course."

Going out into the hall, she picked up the telephone receiver and asked for Seaton's number. Sanders passed by, and Bentley, but of course it didn't matter, now, who heard whatever she wished to say to him. They were engaged to be married.

An orderly answered the telephone and took down a message for Seaton. Would he call on Miss Dobson as soon as convenient?

She would be in all the afternoon and evening. She left it at that.

On her way upstairs, she met Willie and Nance coming down. He had waited very long and patiently in the green-and-amber room, and his red face expressed his trials. He had his hand round her arm as they came downstairs, and was carrying her away to lunch. Seaton's letter crushed in her hand, Leila stood back in a recess, so that the two might pass abreast.

Nance uttered, "Good morning," faintly, and Leila smiled. Willie grinned dourly, and said: "Hello, Miss Dobson! Don't you treat *your* young man like this!"

She watched them a moment as they went.

"Twelve thousand a year!" she said bitterly under her breath.

Mrs. Abbott was in the green-and-amber room, idling with the pug. Leila proceeded to her little typewriter.

"When are you going to be married, Miss Dobson?" said Mrs. Abbott coldly and clearly behind her.

Leila turned, put her arm over the chair back, and regarded her questioner steadily.

"I don't know, exactly," she said. "On a subaltern's pay——"

She paused. A faint smile touched her lips. Mrs. Abbott looked back at her, petrified in the stroking of the pug.

"Subaltern's pay! Why, Charles Seaton is comparatively rich! He has quite large private means." And, with malice allied to incredulity, she added, "You mustn't tell me you didn't know that!"

"I thought it," said Leila. With women, she was fairly frank. "But now, I believe—I gather—that he is likely to give it all up."

"But why?" said Mrs. Abbott, sitting forward, openly staring, intently curious, at the composed girl.

"She wants to see how I take it," Leila thought. So she met the elder woman's gaze with no blanching.

"I don't know. Later on, I may be able to tell you, as much as Charles is able to tell me. But I rather think there will be some mystery about it."

"You mean to tell me that you—you," said Mrs. Abbott unbelievingly, "will allow such a 'mystery' to go unchallenged?"

Leila answered, "I don't say that."

The other woman smiled.

Leila answered her smile with a flash of nature such as she rarely allowed herself.

"Women like me," she said, "are adrift in the world. We have to sail how we can. We make our own charts as we can. I have never known what it is to have soft things, such as you and your daughter have. You call yourselves poor! I laugh at it. I am so poor, and have been all my life, that to become rich seems to me to be the only thing worth getting."

"You engaged yourself to Charles Seaton because he was well off?"

"He is splendid of course," said Leila, "but that wouldn't have been enough without the other."

"And now 'the other' has failed you?"

"I don't know that until I hear more about it, from Charles himself."

"I wonder what he would think if he knew of your motives, you fish of a girl!" said the elder woman, a little maliciously.

"I don't know," Leila replied, "and it may not matter."

She turned to her typewriter.

"Business first!" she said, with a small and almost mirthful sneer.

Her fingers clacked the keys.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Seaton came to the Regent's Park house about six-thirty. He asked for Leila at once. She came down to see him in the big dining room, the one room where they could be sure of uninterrupted talk for another hour at least. Standing on the hearthrug, he watched the door for her entry, more anxiously than he knew. Something was at stake—the verity, the mercy of woman, as to which his heart had become, at a blow, almost entirely sceptic. Now he wavered, uncertain. There were fine, good, true women. There were not. Leila, in her firm hands, held the issue to the doubt.

As she came in, with no hesitation, his look was instantly on her face, gauging her. She met it, and smiled. And a warmth came into the young man's heart, a congratulation, a gladness. With an impetuosity which he had not shown last night—when they had talked more like friends making an arrangement for a partnership than lovers debating speedy marriage—he stepped forward to meet her.

He put his hands on her shoulders. Of middle height, she stood much be-

low him. She was shorter than Nance, almost a little thing, and brave?

"You're brave, aren't you?" was his first question.

She did not answer it, but remained where she was, her shoulders under his hands, and he took that for reply. Bending, he kissed her smooth white forehead between the strongly marked brows.

"You're not going to fail me?"

"Let us sit down here," she said, poising herself on the great club fender. He sat down beside her, reading her face, holding her hand.

"Did my letter startle you, dismay you, very badly?"

"It made me anxious—on your account," she added.

"Not on your own?"

"No," she said slowly. But she added no interpretation of that "No." She was, indeed, not anxious, because she had no intention of taking a risk. "Anxiety" was not the word to describe her state of mind. It seethed; it was angry; it was resolute; it was ready with shield and sword, all in fighting trim; but 'no—she was not "anxious."

"Some women are splendid, I suppose," said Seaton. "I had lost all faith. Perhaps you are going to give it back to me, Leila."

"Don't expect of me more than I can give," she said quietly.

"How much can you give?"

"It's difficult to answer such abstract questions satisfactorily, unless one is in a carried-away mood, a sort of exaltation."

"You're not in that mood?"

"We're neither of us in it, are we?" she answered, matter-of-fact. "Nor are we likely to be, are we? You didn't tell me, last night, for instance, that you adored me." And she smiled up at him. "I think I was honest with you," she said.

"We hoped to be good partners, the

best of friends, and lovers as soon as might be. We understood all that, didn't we?"

Not replying to him, she asked:

"Charles, will you tell me all about this?"

"I'll tell as much as I can tell any one."

"Is that as much as you know yourself?"

"Not quite," he admitted. "Not quite. I'm unable to tell any one the whole of the difficulty."

"Will you tell me why you can't?"

"Because it would involve—some one else—pretty badly."

She said, not looking at him, but playing with the shining buttons of his tunic, one by one:

"Are you making some kind of a sacrifice?"

"Oh, 'sacrifice!' It's such a high-falutin' word."

"Not if it just expresses the conditions. Is that it, Charles?"

"I am, in a way, certainly, surrendering something—withdrawing without a fight—"

"To save somebody?"

"Leila, your mind is uncanny. What can you know?"

She looked full at him.

"You're so like Blair Cornwell!"

"I've heard that before, you know."

Still playing with the buttons, one by one, in a methodical, mirthless way, she said:

"Well, tell me all about this, please."

He caught her hand and stilled its wandering play with the buttons. Something in her tone, her lack of expression, was jarring him.

"Here goes," he began lightly. "I came into a lot of money from my uncle, you know, five months ago. It had been a toss-up whether he left it to me or to another nephew. I got it. In the event of my death, my cousin was to have it. Well, when I heard, I wrote to the lawyers in New

York—they'd known me, on and off, since I was a kid—and put forward my claim, and I wrangled some leave to go over and let them identify me personally. I spent twenty minutes in their office and came back to London. Well, now, the other claimant has hatched up his case, has got a good firm working on it, and they claim I'm dead."

"How can that be?"

Very slowly he answered:

"I don't want you to ask, because I'm unable to tell you."

"It all sounds very strange," she muttered.

"Perhaps I may add a little more, dear," said Seaton, keeping her hand in his own warm clasp. "They invite me to prove that I'm myself."

"That surely is not difficult?"

"Under the circumstances, it is impossible. My late uncle's lawyers know, but under the restrictions I've laid upon them, they aren't at liberty to prove it, either."

"It sounds a riddle."

"It's really simple. A relinquishing of money—that's all. And what is money? A snare, a curse, an obsession. Any man with a clean pair of hands can always fight his way in this old world and make as much as he need have to be decently happy."

"Any man alone, yes." She felt his clasp loosen on her hand, but did not look at him. "It's different for a woman," she ended.

"Other women have given me to understand that."

"They were quite right."

"You say that? You, too?"

"I, too. Do you think I'm so different from all other women, then? I'm just the same—no worse, no better."

"Oh, I thought you above the ruck. I thought you had courage."

"Perhaps I have. But I don't care to fight all my life."

"I—see."

"Charles, I'm going to ask you something."

"Ask it."

"Don't you owe something to the woman you asked to marry you?"

"I should pay all I admit to owing, Leila."

"Yet you'd put her aside to save face for some one else. That's how your talk of a sacrifice sounded. If you must sacrifice, wouldn't you offer up some one else—for your wife? A wife should not be a burnt offering."

"I see your point," he said, after deliberation.

She asked, very softly, nestling her hand in his loose clasp coaxingly:

"Can't you act upon it? Don't you think it fair—just?"

He walked about, abandoning her hand, and she watched him intently, her strong brows drawn down, her lips pressed.

"It is fair," he said, coming back and stopping before her. "Yes, it is just. But it can't be done. Won't you trust me? Believe what I say? Concede my point? And, Leila, I will try to make up to you in any other way possible to me for what you—you miss."

She uttered a little exclamation, half sigh.

"Oh, it's impossible!"

"Impossible?" said Seaton.

"I'm afraid," she answered deliberately, "that money always must mean a great deal to all women."

"As I thought!" he exclaimed bitterly.

"You can't blame us," said Leila, tracing the pattern of the carpet with her shoe point.

He walked up and down the long room again.

"Come to plain terms!" he exclaimed then, stopping once more before her.

"I cannot marry you on your pay. It's pauperdom."

Seaton stood before her a full minute, thinking, examining her. She was

white with a kind of sullen anger, her eyes shining and deep, her breath coming fast.

He nodded acquiescence.

"Very well," he said. "You accepted me—not out of good understanding, comradeship—but solely for the price I could pay?"

"I did," said Leila clearly, "as other women do. As Nance Abbott does."

He bit back words on the very threshold of his lips. She saw the effort, and tried to make him speak.

"You know," she said, "why Nance Abbott is marrying Willie Chase. She is marrying him for the same reason that all the girls in her set marry. For money! For two cars and unlimited credit at their dressmakers! The value they must give in return for what they get doesn't matter to any of them. It doesn't do to think of it till it's too late to draw back. Then we can't think. And we're content to have it so."

The soldier did not speak. He was smiling a little, and his smile was very bitter.

"You shouldn't set women up on altars," said Leila, provoked. "Either as deities or sacrifices, they're failures there."

"I believe you," said Seaton.

"Tell me one more thing. Is it for a woman or for a man that you are giving up your fortune?"

"Ah! I'm sorry. That I can't tell you."

"Then I know! It's only a woman you'd be so delicate about! You are giving it up for some woman!"

He almost saw her thoughts darting hither and thither, like birds, gathering together the stray materials for weaving.

"I could put the whole story together, I think!" she said suddenly, looking up at him.

He smiled contemptuously.

"Nonsense!" he said. "May I wish you good-by?" and he walked out.

Bentley was loitering in the hall, and as the young officer came from the dining room and held out his hand for his cap and stick, the page detained him.

"Mrs. Abbott would like to see you for a few minutes before you go, sir."

Wishful to decline angrily, to taboo all women, with a renewed sickness of their soft, false company upon him, Seaton ran upstairs. His colonel's wife! He must, of course, see her, obey. He stood in the doorway of the green-and-amber room before Bentley could dart in to announce him; he put his heels together, and bowed stiffly and ceremoniously, giving, willfully, the impression of a man loath to enter.

Margot Abbott beckoned him in, with the dimple playing, and took his two hands.

"I must positively kiss you, Charles!" she said, and kissed him.

"Why?" he demanded blankly.

She became humorously amazed.

"Charles!" she reproached him. "I despair of you! You'll never be pretty! Why?" Must I say? Well, then, it is my natural woman's emotion at an engagement which quite got the better of me. You understand?"

"Then," said Seaton, and, in spite of himself, he smiled, "you can take the kiss back, dear lady."

"Charles?"

"Won't you, please?"

"Certainly not," said the lady.

Seaton sat down by her.

"I'm engaged no longer," he said briefly.

Mrs. Abbott did not look her amazement and curiosity. She was too wise. She interested herself in punching up a flattened cushion daintily, and wanted a match for her cigarette. Then she looked at him and put her hand on his arm.

"'M?'" she murmured, long drawn out, mellowly inflected.

"I've lost some money," said Seaton. "No matter."

"It matters very much indeed, dear boy."

"No," said Seaton, "to a man on his own, money is nothing. It's almost an incubus. To a man wanting to marry, of course, it becomes a necessity. A woman has to be bought."

"We're the most precious things on the earth," Margot Abbott murmured, "and, please Heaven, we always shall be!"

"It sickens me!" said the young man.

She said quietly, all affectations dropped—for one of her moods was the good-fellow mood, which men appreciated not less than the coquettishness of other moments:

"Wouldn't you like to tell me all about it, Charles?"

"Is there anything to tell? Except that last night I asked Leila Dobson to marry me; that this morning I told her I was going to lose my money; and that this evening she chucked me away. I suppose most women would have done the same."

"My dear boy! And are you really losing it all? How does it happen?"

"Another claimant—"

"Can't you fight him?"

"In the circumstances, no."

"What are the circumstances?"

"That I can't tell you."

"Wouldn't you tell Miss Dobson, either?"

"No."

"Circumstances so often mean another woman."

"They do mean another woman."

"If you knew how you intrigue me!"

"I'm sorry. For you'll have to go unsatisfied. By the way, will you like me less because I'm poor?"

"Oh, dear boy, don't be cynical!"

"You are a dear to me," said Seaton. "I wish all women were as kind."

"Oh, my dear, I can afford to be," she said with a little rich crow of a

laugh. "You see, I don't want to marry you."

"It seems nobody will now!"

"Oh, dear boy——"

"It's just as well, perhaps," he mused. "I've thought sometimes—though I didn't act upon it last night—that to marry a girl and to make her a widow, perhaps, in a week——"

"You mustn't go out—there—predestining yourself!"

"Why? Is it so dreadful? Remember, a man thinks more in the rough than a woman. We accept our luck. And as for me—I have nothing very dear to live for——"

Both turned suddenly, although there had been no sound above that of Seaton's low voice, and saw Nance standing in the doorway.

The girl was whiter than ever, and her breath came in gasps as if she had been running. She came into the room slowly, extending a hand to Seaton.

"You were saying?" she murmured as if involuntarily.

"The most depressing things!" said Nance's mother, moving between them when the cursory handshake was over.

"I am sorry," the young soldier said gravely, "if I have depressed you." He stood to make his adieu.

Nance had dropped upon the divan. Her hand motioned tentatively to the empty space beside her, but he did not respond to the invitation; only returned her interrogating look unsmilingly.

Mrs. Abbott shook hands with him, and they walked together to the door. The lady stood there to wave him a farewell as he turned the corner of the stair.

Then she turned back again into the room; her smile faded; her eyes were sharp.

"Oh, child!" she said, weary, impatient. "Pull yourself together! We have to, you know, we women. What is it? Would you care to tell me?"

Her tone betrayed her unwillingness for any disturbing confidences.

"I have nothing to say, thanks, mother. But I want to know this: What was he saying to you?"

"I don't remember, really."

"About having—having nothing very dear to live for."

"I suppose he meant what he said."

"But—there is Leila. They are just engaged."

"Oh, that," said Mrs. Abbott in a light voice, "that is all done with, over. That sort of girl wouldn't marry him now he's lost his money."

"He has lost his money! How?"

"My dear child, how can I tell you? He spoke, but very reticently, of some other claimant, and of a difficulty of proving his own identity. I expect some woman has something to do with it."

The girl sat like marble, saying to herself breathlessly:

"Difficulty of proving—identity is—He is Charles Seaton."

"What are you worrying about?"

"Nothing. So Leila—"

"As I say, that sort of girl—"

"Do you think our sort of girl would marry him if he had no money, then?"

"So different," Mrs. Abbott murmured vaguely. "We, who are accustomed to the decencies of life—and a girl like that who doesn't miss what she's never had—"

"I know one girl of our sort who would marry him without a penny."

When Nance had said this, she rose, shining like a pale flame, and drifted to the door.

"Who would follow him barefoot through the world!" she murmured ardently.

"My dear!" her mother gasped.

With one shining look at her, the girl went out and upstairs. For a long while she sat, in transcendent mood, hardly thinking two consecutive thoughts, yet with all her being alight

with some vague, great beam of illumination.

She wrote him again one of her little notes, but quite reckless, this time, of how he might interpret it. She preserved no dignity. In it she asked:

Can't I do anything, say anything? I have a feeling—and only you can know if it is right—that somehow, at this time, I could help you. Do you know that I would do anything in the world to help you?

He replied, soldierly, prompt:

You have mystified me by your kindness. I must decline any proffered help, not understanding what purpose it could serve. May I, in this letter, say "Good-by?" On returning to quarters last night, I had a pleasant surprise, coming after weeks of waiting. I am going overseas on Thursday. Forty-eight hours from now I shall be in France. Thank God!

Nance Abbott lived out, she did not know how, the next week. It passed like a dream, and a bad one.

CHAPTER XIX.

A sleek old man, very sharp set, excessively well groomed, called at the Regent's Park house exactly a week after Charles Seaton had left England for the inferno in France. He had written to apprise Nance Abbott of his coming, and had telephoned for an appointment. She saw him in the green-and-amber room, driving out Leila and her everlasting letters and stores' lists. In her hand she held his letter—the letter that had made her tremble a little when she had received it the night before. She looked very young when she came into the room, very fair and fragile and unhappy; and the eyes that the old man had turned upon her at her entry, hardly, quizzically, softened. He bowed. She held out her hand, and he took it.

"Miss Abbott?"

"Yes. I—I had your letter."

"Thank you for granting the appointment so quickly."

"Not at all," she said. "Shall we sit down?" They sat down. She was frightened. "You are a lawyer," she said feebly, consulting the letter, "from New York?"

He affirmed it.

"And I hope to get through my business as quickly as possible, Miss Abbott, and return. It was only when I arrived in London that I learned, on inquiry, that my client, Mr. Charles Seaton, was already in France."

"He went a week ago."

The old man looked at the door meditatively.

"Shall we be disturbed?" he asked. "How long have we?"

"My mother is out. We shall have all morning."

"I wonder if you can guess," he said, "what my business is." And he fixed his shrewd eyes on her face.

"How could I guess?" she asked.

"Easily," he said, "easily." He swung a pince-nez on its slender chain over his finger and watched the performance with apparent interest. "If I had had an opportunity of talking over the business with Mr. Seaton before I called on you, it would have been better, perhaps. But as it is—" Yet he did not seem regretful. He seemed relieved, glad. He set his lips in a little precise smile. "As it is," he said, "we must carry on as best we can, in a client's interests. I think every one would consider that to be the right course."

"Perhaps. Yes. How can I say?"

"First," he said, "you must prepare yourself for startling revelations. They perhaps will not startle you so much as they startled me when unfolded in my office some five months ago. They astonished and dismayed me." He looked at her more closely, and his lips set together hard.

Suddenly she exclaimed:

"If you would come to the point at once! I could bear it better."

"You've had a strain."

"That dreadful business of the *Vesta*—"

"Shocking!"

She looked into the old man's face.

"You know?" she breathed.

"I know."

She lay back in her chair and closed her eyes.

"What a relief! That some one knows! I have been on the rack!"

He extended no sympathy, but condemned her.

"You have deserved it."

She shivered and made a little appealing motion with her hands. He noticed how thin they were, and added:

"You've suffered for it. It could not have been otherwise. I come of a profession which knows that justice must, and always will be, served."

The girl lay quiet for a few minutes, and he watched her carefully. He asked, "Shall I ring for some water?" and opened a window. He thought she would faint, but unexpectedly she sat forward and asked clearly:

"Was he drowned?"

"Who? Blair Cornwell? No. He was not drowned."

"Where is he?"

"I find he is in France."

She said: "Of course, I knew from the first moment."

"Did you, my dear young lady? And what did you do?"

"I? What could I do?"

"You told him you knew?"

"He defied any recognition. He refused it."

"I think," the lawyer said, "that I will come to my business. Six months ago old James Seaton, of New York, died, and left five hundred thousand dollars to his next of kin, Blair Cornwell, then ranching in Canada. By the time we had tracked the young man—of whom we had lost personal sight for some while—he was on his way to England in the *Vesta*. The news came

to the whole world that every one was drowned save a girl well known in London society—youself. Our letter, meanwhile, was on its way to England. Just as it seemed that all doubts were at rest, and we were about to pay the money to a distant branch of the Seaton family, we received a cable from London, signed 'Cornwell,' impressing absolute secrecy upon us and saying that he had escaped from the wreck on a raft and been picked up by a Portuguese boat, to whom he told a good enough story.

"A little while after, Cornwell arrived in New York to establish his identity to our satisfaction—which he did without the slightest difficulty—and told us that, as Blair Cornwell, he was disappearing. He wanted the money paid into a London bank, credited to him in an assumed name. He chose to be called 'Charles Seaton.'

"Naturally, these rather extraordinary proceedings were not to be revealed outside our office. Our job was to tell the relations that Cornwell had appeared, claimed his dues, and left the country again. But, for our own satisfaction and protection, should any more questions arise, we asked Cornwell—or Seaton—to intrust us with his reasons. He gave us the bare outlines of the story."

"How did he tell it?" she whispered.

"How should you imagine that he told it?"

She shrank a little under the lawyer's gaze.

"It was an extraordinarily bitter story for a man to tell," he said, "and as such he told it."

"He seemed to hate me?"

The old man was silent for a moment; then he replied:

"Unluckily, men can't always hate the women who have failed them."

"You think—he still loves me?"

"I refuse to answer any such question."

"When he came over, he joined my father's regiment. He sought him out. It must have been to be near me."

"There's no gauging the action of a man in love," said the lawyer, under his breath.

Her white cheeks flamed.

"He did not hate me!" she said triumphantly.

"I will not express an opinion. He told us the story. And now, my dear young lady, I will proceed with mine. Our client returned to England and his soldiering, and for these five months he has enjoyed the use of his uncle's fortune. But now we come to the fight.

"The other claimant, professing himself dissatisfied with our personal assurances that Blair Cornwell came to us and proved his identity, has, all this while, been quietly investigating, and now declares—and quite correctly—that the money was handed out to a Charles Seaton; that no such member of the Seaton family exists; and that Cornwell, as his few friends suppose, was drowned. All of these statements, unless we controvert them with the real truth, will appear to every one to be quite correct."

Her eyes fixed on him, her fingers clasped round her knee, she nodded understanding.

"And he? What does he think of doing?"

"He? Quixotic, chivalrous to the last degree, over a woman who'll never thank him for it, he is going to throw up the money without a struggle! He is going to make for her the further sacrifice of his first chance of a good start in the world!"

She breathed deeply, rapidly.

"Don't be too hard on me," she moaned.

The old man's eyes gleamed, scathing.

"It is not my duty to say what I think of what you have done. That is your affair. It is between yourself

and Heaven. Charles Seaton is not even admitted as a third party in your calculations. You have been extraordinarily ruthless throughout."

"If you only knew! I'm not ruthless! I'm weak, frightened, appallingly wretched! I would do anything in the world to restore to him—all that he has lost through me!"

"It would take a big effort, a big sacrifice. The biggest, you understand?"

"I understand."

"It would be, I suppose, a damning confession for a woman to make publicly."

She shuddered, and a little horrified cry broke from her lips. Pressing her clenched hand against them, she sat silent, brooding, staring down at the carpet. Her frail cheeks, her big eyes, the studied lure of her gown, as she sat on the green-and-amber divan, made up a picture of woman fragile in courage, in will, in morals—in everything, fragile. The old man looked at her with the eye at once of a connoisseur and a judge, his pince-nez dangling over his stretched forefinger by the thin gold chain. He took in, a little distastefully, her whole environment, sniffing the heavy aroma of the incessant lilies.

"It might be the making of you," he added impartially.

"It will kill me!"

"No, no! I am an old fellow," he said, "and I know. These things don't kill. When you have done it, you would go out and make reparation, in the only way a young and healthy woman can, just now. You would work, or you would nurse the wounded. There are only two ways for a healthy young woman to justify herself at this time—by working or by marrying and supplementing the war-exhausted race."

"I was—going to be married."

"And now?"

She thought of Willie's red face; of the flat, dim gold and blue and pink; of the cars, the money.

"He wouldn't marry me——"

"If you confessed to what you had done?"

"Yes."

"Would that matter so much?"

"No."

"You are in love," he stated.

"Yes."

"With young Cornwell?"

"Yes."

He smiled a wonderful smile, lighting his smoothly preserved old face.

"Take your courage in both hands," he counseled.

"He would never forgive me. He hates me now. I should sacrifice in vain."

"He sacrificed in vain."

"He's stronger than I."

"A sacrifice is only a sacrifice," said the lawyer dryly, "when it is undertaken for love, without hope of reward. You appear, young lady, to mean quite a different thing."

She moaned:

"Oh, if only I had the strength, the courage!"

"If you could only throw off the drugs that have undermined you from babyhood! The drugs of ease and sloth and leisure—too much of all!" He sniffed the lilies distastefully, and, indeed, their scent was overheavy in the warm room.

For a while he waited patiently upon the girl's silence; and she sat there brooding, staring downward, her clenched hand against her lips.

"You could tell!" she exclaimed suddenly.

"Not against my client's instructions."

"Ah! You see," she said piteously, "he will not punish me."

"He's a man," said the lawyer slowly. "You are a girl—and a lovely one. Men are compassionate, in such cases.

Besides, he is a soldier—here to-day, gone to-morrow. Money is little to him, perhaps." He gazed at her steadily. "Life is uncertain in France, I believe. Men don't go there for health's sake."

"Stop!" she implored him, and wept.

Her head buried in the cushions, she heard him continue:

"Is there any one else who knows him and could identify him?"

"There is L-l-leila Dobson."

"The young lady who went out as I came in?"

"Yes. She—she knew him in Canada."

"And recognized him here?"

"I t-t-tell you he wouldn't have recognition!"

He said in his dry way, matter-of-fact:

"Will you sit up? Dry your eyes and compose yourself? Please! For I'm going to ring for this young lady."

"If you will wait a moment!" She made a desperate struggle; then calmed herself and sat up, dabbing at her eyes. "Leila Dobson was engaged to him."

"Was?"

"She threw him over a week ago—more than that. Oh, directly she knew of his loss of money."

She enjoyed making the announcement as much as she could enjoy anything. She sat staring at the lawyer through a mist of tears, her damp handkerchief crumpled into a ball.

"I'm not the only heartless girl," she murmured.

The old man rang the bell grimly. He stood on the hearthrug with the face of a judge, condemnatory, if suave. And he murmured—when Bentley, in reply to the summons, had gone for Leila:

"You women! You women! You make heaven or you make hell, but you make it without compromise!"

Leila came in. And Nance, stretching out a hand, whispered:

"Leila, come and sit by me."

All antipathy, distrust, dislike were forgotten. She clung to Leila's hand. The two girls sat side by side on the divan, and the lawyer surveyed them impartially.

He began again his questioning.

Leila was frank; she admitted her convictions sturdily, until it came to reaching a clearing point over the matter of her broken engagement.

And then she said, with her course now running smooth and plainly through the map of her mind:

"I did not refuse Mr. Seaton because of his money losses. That was the reason, the excuse, that I gave, but it was only half true. I gave him up"—she spoke as a woman who has sacrificed—"because I knew"—she looked without a glimmer at Nance—"for whom he was giving up his claim to the Seaton fortune. And I realized that he would never love me."

She got up and went out of the room, vindicated.

"Oh!" said Nance, both hands pressed tight to her breast. "Oh!"

"Is there any one else who knows?" the lawyer queried.

"A hairdresser, Chrysa Andersen, knows that something—was wrong."

She faltered out her story.

He took down name and address, still in his dry and noncommittal way.

"I'll see the woman. You will never have further trouble with her. I should change my hairdresser if I were you."

Again he was regarding her interrogatively, closing his notebook and waiting, as for some final decision to be won.

"And you, young lady? You?"

He came over to her side and looked down upon her. He was a masterful old man, but now his humanity, pitiful for her, shone through the iron of his face. She caught at his hand.

"If I tell every one—if the papers

know—if it all comes out before he can be consulted—Blair will keep this money? And he will know I've done what I could at last—"

She saw her world tumbling like a pack of cards. She stared around her forlornly.

"What will be left?" she cried in a sudden terror.

"Who knows?" said the old man, watching her.

"What shall I do when it is all over?"

"There was never more work in the world."

"I have never worked. I am silly, useless."

"Poor drone!" he said. "This will be the end of you. But you will have a resurrection. There are fine things in front of you yet."

"What?" she whispered.

He shook his head and said:

"I can't tell. They will be for you to deserve and win."

"When am I to tell? What am I to do?"

"There is no time like the present."

"But how—how?"

"You would visit with me the firm of London lawyers who are investigating the case on behalf of the other claimant, and make your statements."

"You could have told them all there is to tell."

"I am forbidden."

"And I—"

"I cannot prevent your making any statement you wish to make, young lady!"

She sprang up suddenly, still holding his hand; he felt her clasp tremble and tighten. Her cheeks flushed, and her eyes fired. She seemed fragile no more, but was like a flame.

"No one shall stop me!" she declared.

"Put on your hat."

He rang the bell and said to Bentley:

"A taxicab, please, at once."

She had hardly left him before she

was down again, her hat on, her fur coat in her arms. He held it for her silently. While she thrust in her arms, she said:

"When it is once done, it can never be undone!" And, in the taxi, again: "When I have said it, it will never be unsaid any more! It will all be over!"

"Burn your boats," said the old man, now fatherly. "It's the only way you will ever learn to swim."

CHAPTER XX.

Willie waited a long while for Nance that morning. He called at twelve-thirty in the car, to take her out to lunch, but there was only Leila in the green-and-amber room, clacking on what he spoke of viciously as "that eternal and infernal machine." He strode across and stopped her without ceremony, taking her hands off the keys and keeping them in his grasp. He began:

"Look here! Stop and answer questions, there's a dear girl! Bentley tells me Nance has gone out with some old man, named Carmon. Who is this old feller named Carmon? And when's he going to bring her back? You know everything. I s'pose you can tell me."

"I could tell you," Leila replied pensively.

"Well?"

"I mustn't tell you—any more than that they've gone out on business."

She made little wriggling movements of her hands, and with a fleeting grin, he remarked:

"I suppose I mustn't hold your hand, now that you're engaged."

"I never allow people to hold my hand," said Leila. "But all the same, I am not engaged."

"What? Already?"

"Already."

"We'll discuss that presently." He examined her frankly. "You don't

look as if you're worrying very badly over it."

"Thank you. I am not."

"You're very close, aren't you?" said Willie admiringly. Then, reverting swiftly to his former theme, he demanded: "What 'business' has Nance got, and with whom? Women don't have 'business.' That's the most original—and unconvincing—excuse I've ever heard! 'Business!'" He began his deep chuckle, but with little amusement in it.

"I would rather not tell you any more," said Leila. She sent him a glance as if of pity. "It isn't my business to discuss Miss Abbott's concerns," she added.

"She shall tell me herself," said Willie promptly.

Leila smiled.

"What?" said Willie. "You think she won't?"

"I wasn't thinking at all," Leila replied, very softly and regretfully.

"A woman never stops thinking," he said. He lighted a cigarette and announced from the hearthrug, "I'll wait for her here."

But when Leila would have begun clacking on her keys again, he darted at her, exclaiming:

"No, you don't!"

"But," she said, "you've asked me all the questions you wanted to ask, Mr. Chase."

"By Jove, I haven't!" he exclaimed, seating himself near her. "We've spoken of my affairs. Now there's yours. What about this broken engagement, you faithless girl? And when did it happen?"

"A week ago."

"Nobody told me. And every one knew I was jolly interested."

"Perhaps that's why," said Leila; then bit her lips and dropped her eyes very naturally under his hard stare.

Willie laughed deep and chucklingly.

"I'm sorry I said that," she murmured.

"Tell me all about it now," said Chase, twinkling.

"I couldn't. It concerns other people."

"Well, what of it?"

"The other people concern you."

"Look here!" said Willie.

"I would rather typewrite," Leila murmured.

"Don't you dare!" he returned. "Now, look here! I'm primed with curiosity; I'm like an overcharged gun. Tell me this secret which concerns you and other people and, through them, me. It sounds as if I ought to know."

"You ought to know."

"Then I will know."

"Not through me," said Leila, closing her lips.

"Why not through you? Are you being tender of my poor feelings?"

She did not answer, but only looked at him and away again quickly. There was silence. She looked at the tip of her slippers, and he looked at the waved top of her down-bent head. It struck him as a charming head, well carried. He liked that in a woman. He always looked first at the carriage of a woman's head.

"You're rather a dear," said Willie Chase and, lifting her hand, he kissed her fingers.

"Don't!" she exclaimed.

"I'm trying to thank you for your goodness to my feelings."

"I won't have you thank me like that."

"I believe," he said insistently, "that mother-in-law—or could it have been Nance?—told this Seaton fellow you'd been accepting attentions from me; and that he objected; and, being a proper-spirited girl, you told him to go to blazes. Yes, I believe it was that," said Willie Chase.

And he was astoundingly compla-

cent over it. He concealed a grin of pleasure, and his eyes danced.

Leila kept one of her wily silences. She looked up at Willie, and then down at the hand he still held. Then, sighing a little, she said, as if reluctant to speak at all:

"It was not—exactly that."

"But it was partly that?"

Delighted at what he thought was an admission, he leaned forward eagerly, insisting upon a reply.

Leila said, more reluctantly:

"You will know a good deal more than you know now—very soon."

She pulled her hand away and adjusted a sheet of paper in her machine tentatively, while he sat staring at her, puzzled, suspicious, widely awake.

"Oh, I say!" he exclaimed with a sense of injury. "You must say more than that!"

She shook her head and pressed her lips tight.

Then, "I'm sorry!" she burst out, as if spontaneously. "You don't know how sorry I am!"

A taxicab drove up, and stopped just outside.

"That is Miss Abbott, I think," said Leila, turning quickly upon Willie. "Please go! Please wait in the drawing-room! I must stay here—I have my letters to do. But you—please go!"

"Why?" asked he sulkily.

She rose and put her hands on his wrists and pulled at him weakly and womanishly. He was on his feet in an instant. She drew back, behind her chair.

"All right! I'll go!" he said, heaving a quick breath. "You're a dear. It's a shame! I say—" He was at the door before he spoke what was vaguely fumbling in his mind. There, turning, he uttered it: "Yes, you're a dear. You're one of the best and nicest. I believe you *feel*. Lots of women are

fishes. Ugh! Of course I'll go. You shan't be bothered over me."

He was out of the room, closing the door noiselessly. When Nance ran up the stairs, he was waiting for her by the open drawing-room door. He wagged an accusatory forefinger.

"You badness! I believe you clean forgot—"

She stopped as if shot; then came to him.

"No, I didn't! No, I didn't!" she repeated uncertainly. "But I had to go out. I'm not late, am I?"

"There's plenty of time." He drew her into the room, looking imperturbable, but she felt his eyes boring like gimlets into her secret soul. "What have you been so frantically busy about this morning, eh? Dressmakers? Hair-dressers? What was it?"

"A matter of business, Willie."

He scoffed again.

"Business! Pretty women have no 'business.' That's what *I'm* for. I quite thought you realized it, too! What was the piece of 'business,' eh?"

"I can't tell you, just now."

"You can't?"

"At least I could, here and now, I suppose." She pulled off her gloves finger by finger, fumbling and fidgeting over them. "But don't bother me!" she begged quickly. "Let's go out to lunch."

"You quite ready?"

"In a minute. I'll get fresh gloves. Wait, will you?"

She sped up the next flight, and he heard her stop at the door of the green-and-amber room.

"What's between those girls this morning?" he thought.

The clack of the keys came out to him as the door was opened. He envisaged Leila sitting there, dainty, yet strong, with a queer force about her, her rather wonderful white skin gleaming under the impalpable covering that her modish blouse provided for her

shoulders. He thought again of the tricks, the turns her hair took, as he heard the murmur of the two voices.

Nance was saying, tremulous, frayed with her fear and excitement:

"I've done it! It'll get into the papers this week—perhaps to-morrow. Those picture papers, you know, which publish one's photograph and description. It was necessary to convince the lawyers we're fighting. It's their business *not* to be convinced, you see. They asked if I was willing to put such a story into black and white. 'Mere private and privileged statements don't impress us,' they said. So I—I rang up a woman journalist I know—she always does the dinners and dances for the *Empress*, you know—and I said:

"I have a story for you."

"You gave it unreservedly?"

"Just that." She nodded. "I kept back nothing. I want it all out, quickly," I said. "Then I can't go back."

She leaned against the door lintel, drawing her gloves slowly back and forward through her hand, her bright eyes fixed on Leila.

"What do you think will happen now?"

"I don't think. I can't. It's all blank. Who knows?"

"You are awf'lly brave," said Leila insincerely.

"Oh! I've been a coward and you know it."

"Are you going out again, now?"

"To lunch, with Mr. Chase."

"You will tell him?"

"Oh, why? I want him to hear otherwise, somehow. There will be the papers."

"You will leave it to the papers, then?"

"I think I must," Nance murmured uncertainly.

She ran down again to where Chase stood awaiting her by the fire, one el-

bow on the mantelpiece. His keen survey, turned on her as she entered, showed him that she carried in her hand the same pair of gloves.

She had, then, been too preoccupied, too distract, even to carry out that small detail for his deceiving.

He roused himself from thought.

"Well, we'll go," he remarked.

As they went downstairs they went separately, he following her. He did not walk by her side, her arm in his possessive hand, as usually. And they drove, almost in silence, to the Savoy.

Over lunch he said to her again, with a meditative quietude which she did not know in him:

"Look here. Wouldn't you care to tell me what's troubling you? I have my uses, you know."

"Thank you," she said softly. "But I can't."

"Can't or daren't, darling?"

"Both," she answered. And meeting his eyes, she added, "Willie, I don't think you're ever going to marry me."

"It's fixed," he said, almost brutally. "What nonsense! It's fixed, and I'll keep you to your bond, my dear."

"Will you? I don't believe you will."

"What's the game?" he asked.

Observing her with a minute scrutiny that missed no nuance of changing expression, he saw a new radiance, high, strange, in her eyes. They were looking beyond him, right through and out of the big restaurant.

"Another fellow?" he flamed.

She shook her head.

"What, then?"

"When you know what I'm really like, you won't want to marry me any more."

"I flatter myself I know already just what you're like."

"You don't. But you will."

"When?" said Willie. "Quit fooling, there's a darling. I don't love

mysteries. When does the revelation happen?"

"To-morrow, probably."

"Come!" said Willie. "That's not long to wait, anyhow."

With a soberness that was as new to him as her queer radiance, she mused:

"I expect I haven't treated you too nicely, Willie."

"Oh, come!" said Chase. "This is awful! No nice girl repents at lunch. As for the way you've treated me, why, you can atone in the very near future for that." He smiled slightly. "But women are all words," he added easily.

She nodded.

"We're cowards, you think?"

"Arrant cowards. And humbugs. I should like to see any woman face any big situation square, like a man. It would be instructive. I think I've garnered all women's possibilities but that. And I doubt if that's possible to her at all. She would drag in some man to stand by and do the hard swearing."

"The worst thing a woman can be called upon to stand is loneliness."

"You are not called upon to stand it."

"I am so lonely, Willie! I am standing quite, quite alone."

"My dear girl!" protested Chase.

After lunch he took her for a drive. They had tea in a Surrey village overlooking pine woods. And she thought to herself:

"The last time, this is the last time! And to-morrow I'll be on a desert island. All the ships of the world will go by a long way off, but no one will come to find me there."

Fanciful thoughts, very melancholy, possessed her. Yet a stirring and striving within her toward some goal hitherto unsighted kept her in a species of unreal exhilaration. She responded to Willie more warmly than she had done; he was a human being who loved

her. Love was a wonderful thing; she had treated it too lightly, taking it for granted, as the owner of a garden looks upon some lovely bush that is always in flower. But now, so soon, she would be gardenless and flowerless.

She did not undervalue to herself her self-imposed penalties, the judgments she had invoked.

And she was soft to Willie, kind, very gentle. He thought to himself: "These women! She's propitiating me against something big!"

Yet she was not. She was atoning, apologizing, repenting to him by her sweetness.

She was longing all day for the night to come, for the hours to pass, for the punishment to fall.

CHAPTER XXI.

Nance woke serenely.

The day was here, and the blow would fall. At last, finally and irrevocably, she had surrendered herself to justice. She felt peace, and did not know that it was because she had exhausted herself. She had slept all night perfectly. She felt well. Only when the housemaid brought her breakfast tray, she could not eat. She sent Bentley out for all the most sensational dailies he could lay hands upon.

And they were brought up to her, while she lay in bed, not waiting to rise, caring wonderfully little about anything in the world.

She opened, first, the *Pictorial News*, and there, gazing at her, she saw her own face. The woman journalist, avid, had ransacked her desk for portraits of the heroine of the *Vesta* affair. And there were headlines. She saw flung across the page:

AMAZING CONFESSION OF SOCIETY GIRL.

She opened another paper. The woman journalist had here sold the

story to be written up on the staff, and a perfervid member had headed his column:

WHITE-HANDED MURDER!

Margot Abbott was in her daughter's room, shaken, white. The morning paper that had been brought her with her own breakfast tray was crushed between her hands. And she cried out:

"What have you done? Oh, what have you done? Don't you realize that you have ruined yourself? And that I, as the mother of such a daughter —"

She saw her girl, white upon her pillows, drained of all vitality, great-eyed, pale-lipped, apparently strengthless. And suddenly she fell on her knees beside the bed and cried.

"That such a horrible thing should have happened to me!" she wept.

"Poor mother!" said Nance in a weak voice.

"I have read it all!" Mrs. Abbott sobbed. "Is it true—all of it?"

"All of it, mother."

"It is terrible! It is an awful story! What people will say! What Willie will say! You see how these dreadful newspaper people have fastened on it! They've all taken the same line—except the *Period*, which speaks about your 'remorse.' You were mad to tell!"

"If you have read it—"

"I tell you I have read it all!"

"Then you ought to know that I couldn't let him make—any further sacrifice for me. He offered his life once. I couldn't—demand—anything further."

Mrs. Abbott said:

"Why not? Why not? He was willing to shelter you. You see, he said nothing. It is you who set all this dreadful business going! You have done it! Oh, you little fool!" And she wept.

"I couldn't do anything else."

"In these times—why, he may be killed any day—and the money wouldn't be any good to him! Didn't you reckon all that?"

"How could I reckon? I've done with reckoning for myself. And if he's killed to-morrow—I—I hope he will have read to-day's paper first."

She spoke once more in that faint, slipping voice in which she had accepted the news of Leila's engagement; and, looking up, Mrs. Abbott saw her eyes closing, her lips whitening.

"Child," she cried, "you'll collapse!"

She dashed a wet sponge on the girl's face.

"You must stay here," she said in little gasps. "You're ill. And, anyway, what can you do but hide? Your father went out early this morning. What he'll say when he reads all this!" She shivered, and tears dropped down upon her silk wrapper.

"I'm afraid," said Nance, very faint, totally indifferent, "that I am troublesome."

"Troublesome!" Oh, what a word!"

"I should like to die, but there's no chance of it, I'm afraid, mother."

"Oh, love!" said Mrs. Abbott on a high key. "Don't be so unreasonable! What is to be done? Oh, what is to be done? It's nearly ten, and I haven't dressed. I had to read these dreadful papers all through!"

"Poor mother!"

"You are quite indifferent to what I am feeling!"

"As indifferent as you are to what I feel."

"Oh, child, how can you say that? Have you drunk your tea?"

"I don't know."

"You must know things! You must prepare yourself! Pull yourself together!"

"Prepare myself for what?"

"What people will say—and do."

"I don't care. I'll just stay here. I'm so tired that I feel as if I could sleep forever."

"Prostration!" Mrs. Abbott murmured. "Breakdown! It's the best attitude for you, I've no doubt." She laid a finger on the girl's pulse. "I shall send for the doctor," she said. "You—you'll collapse, my child."

As she stood there beside the bed, they heard the front-door bell imperatively pealing.

Margot Abbott sprang to the door with a little cry.

"I'm unnerved!" she said. "Quite unnerved! Who is it? Not—not newspaper people!" She listened, leaning out. "Some one's speaking — It's Willie!"

From her pillow the girl spoke quietly, firmly:

"Mother, please go down—see him—arrange everything."

"It is arranged! What can you mean?"

"Do you suppose he'll marry me now?"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Abbott in a small, shrill wail of desperation. But, hitching her wrapper round her with an irate tug, she ran down to her sitting room.

Willie had already reached it and was pacing up and down; now and again he stopped to stare angrily at that obese and regardless pug sleeping on the hearth. At Mrs. Abbott's meek, despairing cry of "Oh, Willie!" he turned and looked at her standing in the doorway, in her long, slim wrapper, with a little French cap drawn over her picturesquely untidy hair.

"Well!" he said.

And for a long half minute they stood and looked at each other.

"Oh, Willie!" she murmured.

She advanced, swiftly, flutteringly, into the room and sat upon the divan.

"Oh, Willie!" she said. "What and I to do?"

He laughed suddenly, his chuckle.

"Excuse me," he said grimly. "Your point of view, you know— Some of you women are dashed funny, sometimes."

"I fail to see how you can be amused."

"I am far from amused."

She had been watching him from under her long eyelashes, and indeed she saw that the man was angry, very angry. She did not quite know this intense new stillness that informed him. When he spoke, it was too quietly; and when he looked, his look was too obscure, baffling.

She paused and heaved a sigh or two.

"Where is Nance?"

"In bed," said Mrs. Abbott, "and remaining there—c-c-collapsed—p-p-prostrated."

Again he laughed.

"Wise young lady!"

"Willie—you're speaking strangely."

"I apologize. But how?"

"You—you—" She advanced upon him flutteringly, and clasped his arm. "Oh, reassure me, Willie!"

"About what?"

"You know."

Dropping all pretense, all evasion, he replied with new force and suddenness:

"Yes, I do know! And you know, too. It is plain to you—although you are trying to deceive yourself—that no man, *no man*, will overlook a story like this. Can't I piece together the whole thing for myself? She led this feller on, tricked him, cajoled him, made him lose his head. Thank God I'll never lose mine for any woman alive! Then there comes this scene of the wreck. They were alone together. What moral sense has such a girl—any girl got? And he was a fool if he didn't make the most of his time.

"And then—after all that—she turns him down, commits him to the sea, as soon as rescue's in sight! Craven, she

thinks of what she's let herself in for! The paper I saw this morning, with a paragraph headed 'White-handed Murder,' is right! Right to the last letter! That the feller's still alive is no thanks to her. He was a fool, of course, to offer such a sacrifice for a woman. I wouldn't, and I'm right. But some of us *are* fools. Poor devil, he must have been pretty far gone—pretty bad!"

"Oh, stop!" implored Mrs. Abbott.

"Very well, I'll save your ears. They're tender, very. And I'll take myself off."

"Willie, please!"

"I wouldn't marry her," he said, with a tremendous and curious anger. "I have my codes, even for a woman. I don't allow that even a woman can play a game like that. You will tell her so. You will say that I send her 'Good-by.'"

"But," she coaxed, "think! You've that flat all ready. You've—"

"Some other woman will adorn it, no doubt."

"Oh!"

"Men have their consolations always at hand."

"Oh!"

He laughed again.

"You don't fool me with your 'Ohs,' dear lady."

She followed him to the door.

"You're going?"

"I'm going."

To the head of the stairs she followed him, and there he kissed her fingers ironically.

"Good-by, pretty ex-mother-in-law," said he.

He ran down. He was hardly discomfited, very little disconsolate. Chiefly he seemed very, very angry. He puzzled her, and she stood listening for his exit.

"Why doesn't he go?" she wondered.

He had gone deliberately into the dining room and rung the bell. To Sanders he said, as deliberately:

"Please ask Miss Dobson to speak to me, if she can, at once."

And Leila came to him, from some business in the servants' regions, house-keeping book and pencil in hand, controlled, quiet, alluring.

Chase did not wait. He advanced upon her with the swift determination of the bulldog man who has made up his mind. He snatched the little book from her, flung it away, and closed his arms round her.

"Leila," he said, "I believe you're a white girl. Will you marry me this morning if I can get a license? Tomorrow morning, at least, I can do it."

The tremendous triumph that seethed through her kept her silent. And he took it, in spite of all he thought he knew, for hesitation.

"My God!" he said with passion. "Give me a girl who's straight! I *will* marry you, Leila!"

She realized now, that, very definitely, she had thought the same thing, for quite a number of weeks. She looked up at him, flushed with sheer conquest.

"I'm afraid," she said; and indeed, partly, she was.

Willie laughed, joy in his chuckle. And he suddenly murmured emotionally over her bent brown head and, raising it forcibly, kissed her on the lips.

Three days after, Seaton rang the doorbell of the Regent's Park house.

He was weary, travel worn, straight from the hell of the front trenches; and he looked a little dazedly at Mrs. Abbott, who flew down the stairs to meet him.

"Charles!" she cried.

"Where is she?" he said without preamble.

"She? Oh! Oh, *so* ill! Two doctors, nurses—Oh, it has been *awful*! What I shall do I don't know!"

"I haven't the same indecision."

"How did you get here?"

"I got special leave somehow. Don't ask me—I can't remember. 'Urgent private affairs!' Oh, Lord! Please, I want to see her, be with her every possible minute."

"She has been so ill."

"I won't make her worse," he promised huskily.

"Five minutes—"

"Ten."

"Ten, perhaps." And she began to smile and led him upstairs by the hand in her usual arch way.

She looked into the room on the second floor and uttered pleadingly, in a conspirator's voice:

"Nurse, I have brought her a visitor. Please, a few minutes!"

And the two women, with the ability of women, spirited themselves, somehow, mysteriously away.

Opening her tired eyes, the girl in the bed saw the young soldier standing there, looking at her, worshiping.

THE END.

The opening installment of a new novel by May Edginton will be published in an early number of AINSLEE'S





PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

ALAN DALE

THE most novel experiences I ever had in my life were those that preceded, attended, and succeeded the production of my play, "The Madonna of the Future," at the Broadhurst Theater. Sympathetic friends approached me furtively and seemed to hate to broach the subject. I noticed on several occasions that these friends appeared to be endeavoring to find courage to discuss the question. They were very timid.

One would say, after a portentous pause: "Why did you do it? After all these years—why?" There were unshed tears in his voice.

And another: "You're sensitive, and I'm very sorry for you. You know what will happen, of course. The Lambs Club will turn out and tear you to pieces. You will never be able to bear it." There was repressed emotion in this, and plenty of it.

One more: "You've been telling men how to write plays for more years than it is decent to remember, and now you enter the arena. Have you never heard that it is fools who rush in where angels fear to tread?" This kind would avert his face, so that I should not see the lurking sorrow in it.

Mr. Jay D. Barnes, of Manager Morosco's office, asked me to write an article entitled: "Why I became a playwright," and was quite surprised when I handed him in an essay called, "Why

I wrote a play." I thought that the difference in the titles explained a great deal.

And so it went. Mysterious paragraphs appeared in the public prints—I love to call newspapers "public prints"—to the effect that I had at last succumbed to play vanity and that my end was in sight. It was all very exciting. But the most striking prophecy made in connection with this effort of mine—and, by the bye, I call it an effort principally because it wasn't one—was that my colleagues—those who review plays with me—would be so indignant at my attempt to ungroove myself that they would express themselves in round terms of distinct disapproval.

Then I went to Baltimore to see "The Madonna of the Future" "tried out," as they put it—to Baltimore, please. I went with the company, and felt exactly like one of them. I listened to their talk, and was much amused. One peculiar thing about actors is that they never have any definite opinion of a play. They have been in many productions, but they cannot judge them at all. At rehearsals, they laughed at my lines and praised them. That was all. I felt that it would be rather undignified for a critic to say to the actors: "Do you think that the play will succeed?" However, I did say it, but received no satisfactory answer. Actors do not think, on those topics. Perhaps it is as well.

I shall never forget Baltimore. It is in Maryland, they say. "The Madonna" was billed at the Academy of Music, and before the opening, I went to look at the theater. My play is what they call "intimate." That is to say, it needs an auditorium that is comparatively small. I gasped at the Baltimore Academy. It was one of those colossal structures that were theaters when theater-going needed huge playhouses. It was tremendous, cavernous, and terrifying. I felt cold chills running up and down my spine.

There "The Madonna" opened, and there I sat and watched it, with the Daughters of the Revolution as a "benefit" audience. There was much laughter, nearly always where I had not expected it, while some of the lines that I had dared to appreciate were unnoticed. The Daughters seemed shocked at the story of the play—dealing with a woman's belief that she has a perfect right to maternity without marriage, if she has all the advantages that money and position can give a woman and the strong desire to bring up a child according to her own notions.

The Baltimore critics tore me to pieces. They almost called me names. They seemed to resent my being on earth. They dipped their pens in the vitriol that they accused me of using in the articles I wrote of other plays—and they gloated! Really, they did seem to enjoy themselves tremendously. It was a banquet, and I was—every course. Fortunately, in addition to my evening clothes, a pajama suit, and a few shirts, I had taken my sense of humor to Baltimore with me; minus that, I should have been lost. Most of the critics came to see me before they wrote me up, so as to make it more enjoyable—at least I know of two who came, but as they are blurred in my memory, I cannot be precise. It was quite exhilarating. The audiences during the week grew and became less critical—

or shall I say "chilly?"—and toward the end of the stay, we seemed to be affably established.

Philadelphia was less trying, and the critics there were comparatively emancipated. But, throughout, there was the idea that I had put myself on trial, and that the jury had every tendency to disagree. The position was this: I had written impudent things about plays for a quarter of a century, and now—now—in "The Madonna of the Future," I was anxious to show exactly how a play should be written. This was the model play! They were not quite sure whether it was comedy, farce, or burlesque. Some of them insisted that it was burlesque, and appeared to think burlesque a crime. They were amazed at its talkiness, and its plotlessness, and at some other ailments that, they said, I had always inveighed against.

Nobody in the company was in the least startled at all this. It was new to me, but it was old to them. "We never expect anything else outside of New York," they said. Cities seldom accept a play that has not had a New York indorsement. Isn't that droll? I should think that they would welcome the idea of judging for themselves. It must be so harrowing to indorse indorsements—so redundant, as it were.

Here is an instance of what I mean. Before "Peg o' My Heart"—the biggest success that the stage has known in years—before it ever saw New York, it was tried out in Providence, I believe. There it played to exceedingly small business, even though Laurette Taylor was the star. Very much later, after the play had established itself in New York, it played in the first city again, and even without Miss Taylor it did exactly four times the business it had achieved when it had lacked the New York indorsement. I hope this isn't terribly "shoppy," but it is instructive, isn't it?

Then came the time when I lost my

own angle. After we left Philadelphia, I had no views at all on the subject of "The Madonna of the Future." I could no longer say whether it was good, bad, or indifferent. I had listened to so many dissenting views, and had watched so many performances, that my brain refused to work. Of course, I knew that I must have liked the play; otherwise, I should not have written it. It was a perplexing predicament, and I felt quite lost.

It was suggested that on the opening night at the Broadhurst Theater, I should occupy my usual seat in the orchestra and pretend to be merely criticizing the performance. It was a clever idea, but one that I could not carry out. Alas, I lacked the nerve! Imagine sitting there, among my brother critics, and watching their faces as the play proceeded! A man with a nerve of iron might have done it. My nerves are not iron. I resisted the entreaty of the management.

Instead, I crouched in the balcony, very much like a criminal, attempting to avoid attention. It was not a dignified attitude, but I felt that, under the circumstances, it was pardonable. Even there, the ordeal was severe. I listened to the laughter, and gradually—gradually—the tension of the situation was lessened. New York was taking it all well. New York was at least sympathetically considering my intentions. New York was doing what Baltimore and Philadelphia had refused to do—and was forgetting *me* and my playwriting. It was losing itself in the play, and doing it beautifully. Everybody had told me that "The Madonna of the Future" was for New York, and only for New York. And so it seemed to be.

At the end of the first act, I was a laughing lad once more. My equanimity was restored. The laughter of that audience was music, and the applause a sort of nectar that went to my head.

Gradually the sense of crime left me. If I had sinned in bursting into foot-light notoriety, it was a very pleasant sin—like a good many other sins. The funny thing was that I felt so actor-y. You know, on opening nights, all the friends of actors send them telegrams. Sending telegrams on opening nights is a solemn rite. I had always laughed at it. It seemed to me so futile. Yet behold me reading almost tearfully the "success" wishes of scores of friends! I registered a mental promise always to send telegrams on opening nights. Silly they may be, but it is frequently the silly things that count. Again my sense of humor emerged, as I saw myself reading telegrams! And from people I had never met, too! I love telegrams from people I have never met!

Last surprise of all—the treatment accorded to me by my colleagues! This was coruscantly enthusiastic. It was bewilderingly complimentary. I felt as if coals of fire had been heaped upon my head, because I had listened to the voices of those who had anticipated what the French call "*une mauvaise presse*." Thoroughly I appreciated the embarrassing position in which I had placed my brethren. It is difficult to judge impartially the work of one with whom one is familiar. It is not exactly a pleasing task. I should have disliked it myself intensely.

And now I am able to judge "The Madonna of the Future." I consider it amusing and light, and I look upon its idea as interesting, especially at the present time when there is so much talk about "the race" in the warring countries abroad. I had read and admired the work of Miss Ellen Key, entitled "Love and Marriage." In fact, it was from that book that I captured the title of my play. I was accused of many other perfidies, but they were untrue. I am very fond of the philosophy of Miss Key—who is a classic in her way—and I admit it. Feminism is quite

exultant to-day, and "The Madonna of the Future" is more of a play for women than for men.

As for the cries of impropriety, they are scarcely worth considering, and they were of Baltimore and Philadelphia rather than of New York. I might say that hardly a musical show is produced to-day that is not more improper than my feminist play. Crowds of half-dressed girls, shrieking with untrammelled voices over the bald heads of ruminating old gentlemen, are regarded as eminently proper and well behaved. There is never any question about them. Yet if an intelligent discussion of intimate matters is offered, wiseacres shake their heads and say:

"What are we coming to?"

Some thought that I had discussed the question of maternity too frivolously. They rebelled at my "offensive flippancy." I thought that the only way to make any appeal at all. If I had been lugubrious and dark green, I should have been relegated to special matinées, and that would have been unbearable. To me, the special matinée is something to be rushed away from. I should have considered myself a pariah. If one is solemn, the accusation is of dullness and seriousness; if one is light, the charge is of flippancy and frivolity. "You pays your money and you takes your choice." I took mine. I preferred to be light and to listen to laughter, rather than to be heavy and to listen to snores.

Here's a curious thing about the actors who take part in one's play. One of the leading players in "The Madonna" would scarcely say, "Good morning" to me, and appeared to look upon me as a rank offender. I wondered why, and discovered later that he considered his part unworthy of his genius.

Some of them wanted me to write them in a few lines—to make them feel

comfortable, as it were! They didn't seem to mind how I felt.

But I was lucky with "The Madonna of the Future," as all playwrights are not lucky. I had a magnificent cast, and an untiring manager. Mr. Oliver Morosco rehearsed the play with remarkable assiduity and zeal, and he selected every actor, after hearing that actor read his lines. What author could wish for better delivery of pet lines than that given by Teresa Maxwell Conover, Ffolliott Paget, and Daisy Atherton? Is there an actress on the American stage to-day who could have given to the rôle of the emancipated *Iris* the authority, the fascination, and the exquisite eccentricity offered by Miss Emily Stevens? Miss Stevens was the *raison d'être* of "The Madonna of the Future."

I feel that I have been tremendously egotistical, but just the same, there are many individual points in all this that may interest those who wonder how plays are done, and how the people who do them feel.

I have left aside—and I feel fearfully guilty about it—such productions as "Seventeen"—which I loved, being of the mature age that enjoys anything youthful; "The Heritage," by Eugene Walter, which was too morbid to last; "Happiness," perhaps the best comedy that Miss Laurette Taylor has appeared in since "Peg," "Success," an old-time melodrama, in which Brandon Tynan was the star; "Josephine," a prosy comedy by Bahr, with Arnold Daly as *Napoleon*; "The Indestructible Wife," a very peculiar comedy by the Hattons; and "Oh, Lady! Lady!" a delightful and appealing musical play at the Princess Theater.

All these were important, and, selfishly, I have let them go for the present. Will you forgive the unintentional slight?

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

IN our talk with you last month, we spoke of Marie Conway Oemler's story in this number as one of those rare bits of art which more than compensate an editor for all the commonplace manuscripts he has to wade through before he finds another. If you have not already read "To Be a Woman," do not fail to do so now. We know that you will find as sure an appeal in its delicate beauty and strength as we did.

Another feature of unusual distinction in this issue is Salomón de la Selva's exquisite sonnet sequence, "One Day in Bethlehem." We said nothing of it in last month's announcement. Frankly, we feared that you might share the growing prejudice that the sonnet form is a sort of hard-and-fast jail in which thought is shackled and beauty fades into a sickly prison pallor.

WE mentioned at the time we printed "The Caravan Man" that its author, E. Goodwin, had been an actor and an artist before he turned his hand to fiction. It may interest you to know that Mr. Goodwin is responsible for the little illustration at the heading of "The Devil Among the Skins."

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS, Mary Heaton Vorse, Ellis Parker Butler, Charles Saxby, Walter Prichard Eaton, Anice Terhune, Rebecca Hooper Eastman, Lawrence Perry, Adele Luehrmann, all contributing to the May number of *AINSLEE'S*, does not mean that we have joined in the scramble for big names at the sacrifice of our old policy of "good stories by any author rather than any stories by good au-

thors." It simply means that these writers have contributed to the May issue the sort of stories that have built up for them their reputations.

The complete novelette for May is by Ellis Parker Butler, and its title is "Behold Our Hero!" We have always regarded chuckling aloud while reading to oneself as a evidence of feeble-mindedness. In the course of this story, we several times caught ourselves chuckling aloud. However, in view of the good time he gave us, we forgive Mr. Butler for the implication.

Gouverneur Morris' gripping story, "Slow Torture," has to do with the German invasion of France. The vengeance wrought by the little brother of one of the victims is not pretty; it is almost adequate.

In "The Despoiler," Mary Heaton Vorse writes with sympathetic insight of the tragedy of calf love.

Lawrence Perry is best known, perhaps, to readers of *Scribner's* and *Harper's*. His introduction to *AINSLEE'S* is a three-part story entitled, "A Romantic Liar." We had intended starting a new novel by May Edginton in the May number, but Mr. Perry's breezy hero has a disconcerting way of upsetting people's plans generally.

Little did Queen Anne know that she would be remembered chiefly for the atrocious cottages that bear her name, little did the gallant General Burnside suspect that his fame would rest largely upon his whiskers, or King Charles that his name would merely conjure up visions of pampered spaniels. Such is fame! Walter Prichard Eaton gives us a score of similar instances in his causerie on "The Bubble, Reputation."



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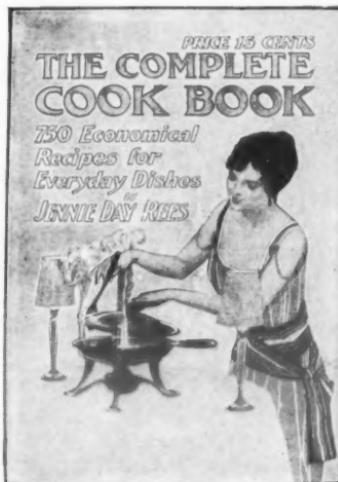
An illustration of a woman with dark, curly hair. She is shown from the chest up, looking down with a thoughtful expression. Her right hand is raised to her head, with her fingers near her hair. The style is reminiscent of early 20th-century magazine illustrations.

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Trying to quit the tobacco habit unaided is a losing fight against heavy odds, and means a serious shock to your nervous system. So don't try it! Make the tobacco habit quit you. It will quit you if you will just take **Tobacco Redeemer** according to directions.

It doesn't make a particle of difference whether you've been a user of tobacco for a single month or 50 years, or how much you use, or in what form you use it. Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff—**Tobacco Redeemer** will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in from 48 to 72 hours. Your tobacco craving will begin to decrease after the very first dose—there's no long waiting for results.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind and is the most marvelously quick, absolutely scientific and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer is in no sense a substitute for tobacco, but is a radical, efficient treatment. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It quiets the nerves, and will make you feel better in every way. If you really want to quit the tobacco habit—get rid of it so completely that when you see others using it, it will not awaken the slightest desire in you—you should at once begin a course of **Tobacco Redeemer** treatment for the habit.

Results Absolutely Guaranteed

A single trial will convince the most skeptical. Our legal, binding, money-back guarantee goes with each full treatment. If **Tobacco Redeemer** fails to banish the tobacco habit when taken according to the plain and easy directions, your money will be cheerfully refunded upon demand.

Let Us Send You Convincing Proof

If you're a slave of the tobacco habit and want to find a sure, quick way of quitting "for keeps" you owe it to yourself and to your family to mail the coupon below or send your name and address on a postal and receive our free booklet on the deadly effect of tobacco on the human system, and positive proof that **Tobacco Redeemer** will quickly free you from the habit.

Newell Pharmacal Company
Dept. 570, St. Louis, Mo.



Free Book Coupon

NEWELL PHARMACAL CO.,
Dept. 570, St. Louis, Mo.

Please send, without obligating me in any way, your free booklet regarding the tobacco habit and proof that **Tobacco Redeemer** will positively free me from the tobacco habit.

Name.....

Street and No.

Town.....

State.....

Former United States Senator Mason

Pioneer in Pure Food and Drug Legislation, Father of Rural Free Delivery System.

Says Nuxated Iron

Increased His Power and Endurance so Much, That He Feels It Ought to Be Made Known to Every Nervous, Run-down, Anaemic Man, Woman and Child.

Opinions of Dr. Ferdinand King, New York Physician and Medical Author; Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly Physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.), New York and Others.

WHAT SENATOR MASON SAYS:

"I have often said I would never recommend medicine of any kind. I believe that the doctor's place. However, after the hardest political campaign of my life, without a chance for a vacation, I had been starting to court every morning with that horrible tired feeling one cannot describe. I was advised to try Nuxated Iron. As a pioneer in the pure food and drug legislation, I was at first loath to try an advertised remedy, but after advising with one of my medical friends, I gave it a test. The results have been beneficial. In my own case I made up my mind to let my friends know about it, and you are at liberty to publish this statement if you so desire. I am now sixty-five years of age, and I feel that a remedy which will build up the strength and increase the power of endurance of a man of my age should be made known to every nervous, run-down, anaemic man, woman and child."

Senator Mason's statement in regard to Nuxated Iron was shown to several physicians who were requested to give their opinions thereon.

Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York Physician and Medical Author, said: "I heartily indorse Senator Mason's statement in regard to Nuxated Iron. There can be no vigorous iron men without iron. Fuller means anæmia. Anæmia means iron deficiency. The skin of anæmic men and women is pale, the flesh flabby; the muscles lack tone; the skin fags, and the memory fails, and often they become weak, nervous, despondent and melancholy."

Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.) New York, and the Westchester County Hospital, said, "Senator Mason is to be commended on handing out this statement on Nuxated Iron for public print. There are thousands of men and women who need a strength and blood builder but do not know what to take. In my own opinion there is nothing better than organic iron—Nuxated Iron—for enriching the blood and helping to increase the strength and endurance of men and women who burn up too rapidly their nervous energy in the strenuous strain of the great business competition of the day."

Former Health Commissioner Kerr, of the City of Chicago, says: "From my own experience with Nuxated Iron I feel it is such a valuable remedy that it ought to be used in every hospital and prescribed by every physician in this country."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston Physician who has studied abroad in great European medical institutions, said: "Senator Mason is right. As I have said a hundred times over, regard organic iron as the greatest of all strength builders. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue.

sue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next, take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while increase their strength and endurance from ten to fourteen days' time while taking iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been going on for months without getting benefit from anything. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance which comes from having plenty of iron in the blood; while many another has gone down in ignominious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron which was used by Senator Mason with such surprising results and which is prescribed and recommended now by physicians is not a secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and highly satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all good druggists.



Former United States Senator Wm. E. Mason, recently elected Member of the U. S. Congress from Illinois.

Senator Mason's championship of Pure Food and Drugs legislation, his fight for the rural free delivery system, and his strong advocacy of all bills favoring labor and the rights of the masses are against trusts and combines, make him a national figure at Washington and endear him to the hearts of the workingmen and the great masses of people throughout the United States. Senator Mason has the distinction of being one of the really big men of the nation. His strong endorsement of Nuxated Iron must convince any intelligent thinking reader that it must be a preparation of very great merit and one which the Senator feels is bound to be of great value to the masses of people everywhere, otherwise he could not afford to lend his name to it, especially after his strong advocacy of pure food and drugs legislation.

Since Nuxated Iron has obtained such an enormous sale—over three million people using it annually—other iron preparations are often recommended as substitutes. The reader should remember that there is a vast difference between ordinary metallic iron and the organic iron contained in Nuxated Iron. The manufacturers insist on having Nuxated Iron.

As You Like It



J U D G E

Because it is a bubbling, cheerful, stimulating friend; a friend who rides no hobbies, except happiness; who nourishes no enmities, except a supreme hatred for the Common Foe of Civilization—Militaristic Germany; who parades no fads and promulgates no eccentricities; breezy, rollicking comrade with a vein of tenderness, a sparkling wit and exhaustless pep—JUDGE is beloved of the nation. With a copy of JUDGE in your hand you can defy all the hordes of boredom and all the demons of ennui.

SAVE your sense of humor as well as the food in your larder. Hooverize your rebellion against the high cost of living by becoming a perfectly good optimist through the influence of JUDGE. Don't be Zeppelinized by unfounded fears or submarine by false economy. The war will be won by soldiers who smile, not by those who sing hymns of Hate. Get behind JUDGE's 42-centimetre gun that punctures the dugouts of doubt and despair. Cut out the frowns and smile, smile, smile with JUDGE.

JOIN up with the army of good folks who find JUDGE a perennial benefaction. Come into the camp of the wide-awake Americans who are doing their bit by radiating happiness in the midst of depressing conditions. Put on the khaki of cheeriness and shoulder the rifle of merriment. Help win the war by shelling the devils of woe from the trenches of discontent. Acquire the "get-thee-behind-me-Satan" attitude of mind that comes from a reading of JUDGE—the happy medium.

Over the Top with Your Dollar!

Why not wallop the willies out of existence with one cunning little dollar? You can do it if you mail the coupon on the bottom of this page and mail it now while the mailing's good.

Toot! Toot! Toot! All aboard for the Land of Laughter! The train is pulling out. Don't get left behind. Jump on and take your seat in the Pullman. Here is your ticket for a three months' trip.

JUDGE, 225 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

I accept your offer—three months for \$1. It is understood that you send me JUDGE beginning with the current issue—12 numbers in all. I enclose \$1 (OR) send me a bill at a later date. (Canadian \$1.25—Foreign \$1.50.)

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Adapted from Rodin's
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